THE TALE OF A TOWN AND AN ENCHANTED SEA

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THE TALE OF A TOWN

AND

AN ENCHANTED SEA.

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THE TALE OF A TOWN

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AN ENCHANTED SEA

BY

EDWARD MARTYN,

Author of "The Heather Field," "Maeve," &c.

PUBLISHED AT KILKENNY BY STANDISH O'GRADY.

LONDON

T. FISHER UNWIN

PATERNOSTER SQUARE.

1902.

There was an adaptation of THE TALE OF A TOWN called THE BENDING OF THE BOUGH made by Mr. George Moore, with my consent, for the Irish Literary Theatre performances in 1900.

EDWARD MARTYN.

THE TALE OF A TOWN.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

JOSEPH TENCH, *the Mayor.*

JASPER DEAN,
DANIEL LAWRENCE,
THOMAS MURPHY,
VALENTINE FOLEY,
RALF KIRWAN,
JAMES CASSIDY,
MICHAEL LEECH, } *Aldermen of the Corporation.*

JOHN CLORAN, *the Town Clerk.*

GEORGE HARDMAN, *an English Lord Mayor.*

MISS MILLICENT FELL, *an English girl, his niece, engaged to marry Alderman Dean.*

MISS CAROLINE DEAN, } *maiden aunts of Alderman*
MISS ARABELLA DEAN, } *Dean.*

MRS. BELLE CASSIDY, *wife and first cousin of Alderman Cassidy, sister of Alderman Leech, and cousin of the Deans.*

MRS. SARAH LEECH, *wife and first cousin of Alderman Leech, sister of Alderman Cassidy, and also cousin of the Deans.*

MRS. COSTIGAN, *an elderly woman, caretaker of the Town Hall.*

A PARLOUR MAID, *at Alderman Dean's house.*

A WAITER, *at the Hotel.*

Several Town Councillors, People, etc.

The action takes place during the present time at a coast town of West Ireland.

THE TALE OF A TOWN.

A COMEDY OF AFFAIRS IN FIVE ACTS.

ACT FIRST.

(*The Meeting Hall of the Corporation.*)

(MRS. COSTIGAN *sets down a large bucket in front, and then leisurely begins to sweep the floor.*)
(JOHN CLORAN *enters carrying some papers.*)

CLORAN (*with importance*). What are you doing here, Mrs. Costigan? Don't you know the Corporation are now due to meet?

MRS. COSTIGAN. I'm tidying the room a bit for them, Mr. Cloran.

CLORAN. You ought to have had that sweeping done long ago.

MRS. COSTIGAN. Have the Corporation never been behind with their work?

CLORAN. Of course not—what do you mean? Are not they always discussing resolutions?

MRS. COSTIGAN. What resolutions, Mr. Cloran?

CLORAN. I'm too busy now, ma'am, to explain them.

Mrs. Costigan. I think you'd find it hard enough to explain them, indeed.

Cloran. That'll do, Mrs. Costigan. It isn't the business of the town clerk to argue with the charwoman of the Corporation.

Mrs. Costigan. Oh, you're a proud man to be town clerk; but I can tell you this Corporation you think so fine, isn't respected much in the town.

Cloran. You are, no doubt, a sound authority as to the feeling of our town, ma'am.

Mrs. Costigan. I'm in the way of hearing many complaints, Mr. Cloran; and believe me if you don't begin to do the people some good, none of you will long remain where you are.

Cloran. Oh, indeed, I suppose your associates, the proletariat, are discontented because there is not more unanimity among the members of our Corporation. Well, what do you expect? You don't suppose that where there are so many men of equal intelligence, ability, and push, ma'am—you don't suppose, I say, that they will sink their individual opinions to follow the opinion of one of their number. The idea is out of the question.

Mrs. Costigan. If they valued the good of the town, you'd think they'd all have the one opinion.

Cloran. You're quite mistaken, my good woman. All their opinions for the good of our town are of equal value. That's what it is; and so one cannot prevail over the other. What we want is a superior opinion to be offered. What we want is a leader. There's the desideratum. A man whose superiority

will unite us to act in the best interests of our town—and believe me, we will find him, if we have not found him already. I think we have.

Mrs. Costigan. You mean young Mr. Jasper Dean?

Cloran. The very man—you know he has been elected Alderman for a ward. To-day he is to take his seat here for the first time, as a member of our Corporation.

Mrs. Costigan. Oh, I have heard the boys talking about him. They say he is a great scholar.

Cloran. Of course—no end of a superior young man, English education, and what not—besides he has one thing especially in his favour.

Mrs. Costigan. What's that, Mr. Cloran?

Cloran. He is in a better position, socially, than any others of the Corporation.

Mrs. Costigan. A real gentleman, I suppose—

Cloran. Just so—very well to do in the liquor trade—that's to be highly honoured in Ireland, ma'am. But there—I hear the members coming.

Mrs. Costigan. Oh, I suppose it would never do for them to see me at all. (*Exit carrying her sweeping brush and bucket.*)

Cloran. She's always trying to push herself forword, the ignorant old woman. I'm sure she'd like to sit with the Corporation.

(*Enter* Aldermen James Cassidy *and* Michael Leech.)

Cloran. Good morning, gentlemen—

Cassidy. Good morning, Cloran—

Leech. Isn't the Mayor here yet?

Cloran. No, Alderman Leech—he is very late to-day.

Cassidy. Any news, Cloran—?

Cloran. Not a word, Alderman Cassidy—

Cassidy. No sign of their granting our demands for compensation—?

Cloran. There is just a communication I received. I shall lay it before the Corporation to-day. It leaves matters pretty nearly where they were, sir.

Leech. This English town is behaving outrageously towards us.

Cassidy. And apparently no steps will be taken by our Corporation.

(Alderman Ralf Kirwan *enters.*)

Kirwan. You are quite right. We must expect nothing from our Corporation. Can you imagine a headless body with all its limbs pounding and hacking at each other? That's our Corporation, sir.

Cassidy. You forget, Kirwan, that you are one of those limbs.

Leech. Very true, James, very true—

Kirwan. Yes, Cassidy—and you are the head which once thought to control them, but which they pulled off with such ease.

Leech. That is altogether a false metaphor, Kirwan. A decapitated head can no longer be a member of a Corporation; and James is still one of our Corporation.

Kirwan. Oh, this is a very strange body you know. Its decapitated head still keeps bobbing about just because it is so light and hollow, for it hopes some day by dint of bobbing to bound up again upon the shoulders of this Corporation.

Cassidy. I am sure by the position I hold in this town that I am entitled more than anyone to lead.

Leech. Quite so, James—it is most impertinent of you, Kirwan.

Cloran. Gentlemen, gentlemen—ah gentlemen, I can aver there is none of you but is entitled to lead.

Kirwan. No, no, Cloran—we want a leader. By the way, is not young Mr. Dean, our new alderman, very enthusiastic on this question of our civic rights?

Cassidy. I am sure we all enthusiastically desire that Anglebury should pay what is due to us.

Kirwan. Yes, yes—I know all about that. But tell me, Cloran, hasn't he been rousing quite an agitation among the electors of the wards?

Cloran. He has, Alderman Kirwan. He is a fine young man; and the people believe him.

Kirwan. I shouldn't wonder if he were just the man to unite this distracted Corporation.

Cassidy. Why do you say so?

of inspiring confidence. Then, you see, he has been

Kirwan. Well, he appears to have the faculty away a good deal, and has not become mixed up in

the miserable factions of this town. Besides he must have some brains, for by all accounts he distinguished himself at Oxford University.

CASSIDY. Oh, not particularly—

LEECH. Oh, not at all, I assure you—

KIRWAN. Then why does every one say he did?

LEECH. He became engaged to an English girl over there.

KIRWAN. Oh, come—that can scarcely be a reason for his reputation of University distinction.

CASSIDY. No, indeed—except that through the influence of this Miss Millicent Fell he seems to have grown most fastidious in his tastes. Anyway she has had a very civilizing influence with him.

KIRWAN. A droll way, certainly, of becoming civilized—

CASSIDY. Why do you say that? I hear she is a person of much refinement.

KIRWAN. Strange that their refinement should never have made them civilize themselves! Woman is the last wild animal that man will civilize.

LEECH (*puzzled*). Dear me—then I suppose Jasper's fastidiousness must be false when it arises only from her influence.

CASSIDY. Yes—I shouldn't wonder if that is why Jasper's fastidiousness makes him appear only a prig after all. He is perpetually condemning the want of honesty and principle in this town.

KIRWAN (*ironically*). No doubt a very sufficient reason for thinking him a prig—

Cassidy. There are other reasons as well.

Kirwan. Are there? He is young you know, and, I am sure, will improve. Everyone believes he has stuff in him.

Cassidy. I tell you he is quite an ordinary young man.

Leech. Of course—James, and I ought to know him. We are his relations, you know.

Kirwan. Yes—it is easy to see you are his relations.

(Alderman Valentine Foley *enters.*)

Foley. Good morning, good morning—I hope you are all very well. I hope you are beginning to feel disposed to act in concert at last.

Kirwan. Certainly—if only some one would come with an uncontentious proposal.

Foley. In honour and conscience I feel bound to take some action at the meeting to-day.

Cassidy. Whether you obtain general support or not, Alderman Foley, will largely depend upon the nature of your action.

Foley. You have read my article in the "Weekly Denouncer"?

Kirwan. It was full of fury, as usual, against the enemies of our town.

Kirwan. The sense of our wrongs fills me with uncontrollable indignation. It is nothing but the sense of our wrongs that keeps me before the public at all.

Cloran. Indeed, Alderman Foley, the people do say that you have a mission among them.

Foley. I am naturally austere. I could never appreciate what people call the comforts and good things of this world.

Kirwan. Bosh—

Foley. What "bosh"—? I tell you I am austere, and have a mission to guard the public interests. You're not going to stultify yourself by advocating carelessness of public interests.

Kirwan. Certainly not—I am very indignant at what I see.

Leech. It is impossible not to feel indignant at the manner in which our sea-port has been ruined for the advantage of that English sea-port.

Foley. But still you and Cassidy here have voted against every measure for re-establishing our line of American steamers which that very English sea-port filched from us.

Cassidy. We certainly dreaded injuring the English line of steamers to America.

Leech. There are so many interests involved, you know.

Kirwan. Of course, when certain members of our Corporation hold shares in the English line—

Foley. Then loyalty to our town is not to be expected.

Cassidy. Loyalty—what do you mean?

Leech. I thought loyalty was a term that only could be used in connection with something English.

Kirwan. Curious that no one in this country can understand its meaning, except in such a sense—

Foley. Upon my honour and conscience, it is a word that is hateful to me from its perpetual association with that callous and perfidious town of Anglebury. I cannot understand our citizens supporting any of her institutions.

Cassidy. That is not the point. What is really serious and blameable is that the town of Anglebury has not fulfilled her bargain.

Leech. The bargain she agreed to when she took the packet station from us—that is what makes our townsmen of all parties indignant.

Cassidy. Especially, too, when the Anglebury Corporation itself appointed a Commission to enquire into the justice of our claims, and when it has been seeking ever since to evade the recommendations of that Commission—I cannot understand this at all.

Kirwan. I can, though. Has not the English Commission reported against the English themeslves?

Foley. Well, now that the Commission has defined our rights, and said that we are entitled to the money due by that bargain, why, in all honour and conscience, don't we legally enforce payment?

Kirwan. Because the man has not yet come, who will persuade our Corporation to do that, or anything else useful.

(*Enter* The Mayor *and* Alderman Thomas Murphy.)

The Mayor. Well, of course, Alderman Murphy, you may bring forward your motion; but I fancy it will meet with a great deal of opposition.

Murphy. I will carry it in spite of the opposition.

Kirwan. That's what every mover of contentious matter thinks.

Murphy. Oh, it's a pity, isn't it, Alderman Kirwan, that you never move any resolution yourself. It's a pity you can't make a speech, isn't it?

Kirwan. There's quite enough of talk. I only care for action.

Murphy. No—you only care for criticising people. That is the passion of middle-aged persons.

Kirwan. Not at all—shall I tell you what is the passion of middle age?

Murphy. Well—what is it?

Kirwan. Glancing down every column of the newspaper to see if your name occurs any where in it—

Murphy. Oh, I suppose you mean that I ——

Kirwan. Yes—that is the essential passion of middle age.

(*Enter* Aldermen Daniel Lawrence *and* Jasper Dean, *followed by other Aldermen and several Town Councillors. Then the public crowd into the place allotted to them.*)

Lawrence. My dear Jasper Dean, I haven't seen you for a long time. How well you're looking!

I never saw you looking so well in my life. I am delighted you have become a member of our Corporation. We want men of your position and education.

Dean. Indeed, between you and me, Alderman Lawrence, public life in our town sadly lacks that higher tone which comes from proper education.

Lawrence. It is for you to import that higher tone into it, my dear fellow.

(The Mayor *and Corporation all now take their places.*)

The Mayor. Mr. Cloran, will you read the minutes of the last meeting?

Cloran. Yes, your Worship—(*Reads from a large book.*) At the last regular meeting, present, the Worshipful the Mayor, Alderman ——

Murphy. That'll do. Let us get on to the business of to-day.

Lawrence. Really, Alderman Murphy——

The Mayor. Order, order—

Foley. What is the good in taking up our time by reading all these minutes?

Kirwan. They might have been read in less time than this dispute will take.

All. That'll do. Enough——

Cloran. Then, I am not to read them, your Worship?

Murphy. Of course, not—

The Mayor (*looking around*). Well, I suppose not—

Cloran. Names of aldermen present and minutes taken as read—(*Laughter, during which he hands the book to* The Mayor.)

The Mayor. Is it your wish, gentlemen, that I sign these minutes which Alderman Murphy won't have read?

Lawrence. It is most illegal.

Murphy. Oh, illegal be ——

Kirwan. Sign them, sign them, and let us get to work.

The Mayor. Well—I suppose I must. (*Signs the minutes in the book.*) Mr. Cloran, have you written as you were ordered, to the authorities in Anglebury?

Cloran. Yes, your Worship—in accordance with your resolution at last meeting I wrote, and have received this answer from the town clerk.

Mayor. Well—read it then. Silence, gentlemen—

Cloran (*reading the letter*).—"Sir—In reply to your communication in which you demand on the part of your Corporation a definite answer from our Corporation to your repeated claims, I am directed by our Corporation, in the first place, to remind you that it is very unusual for us to state definitely beforehand the course of action which we may eventually deem prudent to pursue. Our Corporation wish you to understand that our well-known integrity as English gentlemen (*laughter*) and generosity in our dealings with other bodies have ever hitherto rendered such a demand as yours superfluous, and

that we might have been led to expect from the union of hearts, which has recently arisen between our two towns, a complete disappearance of all doubt as to the possibility of our acting in any other than a just and generous spirit towards you. Finally, I am expressing the very general feeling of our Corporation when I now demand of you such trust in this matter of dispute as past experience should warrant you in bestowing upon us, and remain, etc., etc."

Murphy. We will certainly give that pack of rogues such trust as experience warrants us in giving them, which means just no trust at all.

Kirwan. Our position is not advanced one jot by that letter.

Foley. They will never pay this money unless they are made to.

Lawrence. The English are an honourable, upright people. I am sure they would pay anything that was really due.

The Mayor. Oh, I am afraid experience does not warrant any such expectation.

Lawrence. They never disappoint one's just expectations.

Murphy. Well, I hope they won't disappoint your's. That's all.

Lawrence. What do you mean, sir?

Murphy. Don't you expect the appointment of solicitor to the English Corporation who are wronging us? Haven't you been sniffing after it for ever so long?

Lawrence. How dare you, sir? Mr. Mayor, I protest. I protest in the name of my honourable profession. (*Uproar, and cries of "place hunter"—*)

The Mayor. Order, order—(*Continued uproar—*) Order, order—let us now proceed to discuss what action we shall take in reference to the letter you have just heard read.

Murphy. Mr. Mayor, before we go into that matter, I have a resolution to propose. I beg to propose the following. (*Reads from a slip of paper.*) "Resolved—That our Corporation shall immediately cease to employ for the printing of its notices and advertisements, that journal owned by the Member of Parliament for this town, inasmuch as he has outraged the majesty of our people by voting for a Government inspection of their public expenditure and accounts." Mr. Mayor, I think this a most important matter—

Lawrence. Mr. Mayor, I protest, I protest.

Foley. What for, I want to know?

Lawrence. This is a most improper resolution.

Murphy. Alderman Lawrence, what do you mean, sir?

Lawrence. I thought it was settled that nothing of a political nature was to be discussed at our meetings.

Kirwan. A wise rule where no two persons can agree on politics—

Lawrence. Of course—besides this resolution contains a most serious breach of parliamentary privilege, and renders us liable to severe penalties.

Foley. Oh, come, what a great attorney you are with your discovery of mares' nests, and your bogus threats of the law. I think this is a good resolution, and ought to be passed.

Lawrence. No doubt you think so, when it's passing means that you must get all the printing and advertisements for the "Weekly Denouncer."

Foley. I repudiate your insult to my civic integrity with indignation and disdain.

Murphy. This is only another of his place-hunting tactics. (*Laughter and cries of "order"—*)

The Mayor. Order, order—

Lawrence. Tactics or no tactics, I know what I will do, if this disgraceful resolution is passed.

Murphy (*with suppressed fury as he puts his face close up to that of* Lawrence). What will you do, Daniel Lawrence, you brute? What will you do, Daniel Lawrence, you brute? (*Uproar.*)

The Mayor. Order, order, gentlemen—(*Gesticulates and raps the table with his knuckles.*) Order, order, please, gentlemen—

Kirwan (*laughing*). Mr. Mayor, you are making more noise yourself than all the others put together.

The Mayor. Oh, gentlemen, I beg of you—let us get at once to our business. At this rate we shall never finish. There are many of us who want to catch the four o'clock tram-car to the sea-shore.

Murphy. But what about my resolution—?

The Mayor. Does anyone second Alderman Murphy's resolution?

Foley (*a little embarrassed—after a short pause*).—Mr. Mayor, I had intended to second it, but after the pityful aspersions cast on my civic integrity in connection with this resolution, I would not stultify myself by giving it the smallest support, so I have no option but to remain neutral under the circumstances.

The Mayor. Oh well then, as no one else appears to support it, I suppose it falls to the ground. Now let us consider the letter.

Lawrence. Before we proceed—ahem—

The Mayor. What is it, Alderman Lawrence?

Lawrence. I wish to propose a resolution.

The Mayor. Oh, man alive, we shall be here all night.

Lawrence. It will not take a minute, Mr. Mayor.

The Mayor. Well, well—go on, Alderman Lawrence.

Lawrence (*reading*).—"Resolved—That at the forthcoming Unionist celebration in our town, we lend the Meeting Hall of the Corporation to the Unionists for the holding of their assemblies and conferences."

Murphy. What is that I hear? What is that brazen, shameless resolution?

The Mayor. Order, order—(*Uproar.*)

Kirwan. This is an odd resolution from one who objected to the last resolution for being political.

Lawrence. Alderman Kirwan, you are as great a rebel as ——

The Mayor. Order, order—

Kirwan. I am in favour of suppressing all political party demonstrations. Party politics prevent us from uniting for the interests of our town.

The Mayor. I am afraid your resolution, Alderman Lawrence, is as inadmissible as the other one.

Lawrence. This is disgraceful. Why shouldn't I be allowed to propose so worthy and respectable a resolution?

Kirwan. You have proposed it. Now find a seconder.

Cassidy. I wish to make an explanation, Mr. Mayor. Under ordinary circumstances I would have seconded this resolution, but at present ——

Murphy. Oh, sit down. (*Confusion.*)

The Mayor. Order, order—gentlemen, I beg of you—I trust this incident is over. Alderman Lawrence's resolution, for want of a seconder, falls to the ground. Let us now proceed to business. Gentlemen, you have heard this letter from the town clerk of the English Corporation. What are your opinions of it?

Lawrence. Mr. Mayor, I submit that this is an affair in which we ought to proceed with the greatest caution. (*Murmurs and applause.*) We cannot foretell what may be the consequences, if we rush into any rash action. Our substance and our safety, I may say, depend upon our English neighbours. Are not our savings invested in the very line of steamers with which some mischievous persons among us propose to interfere?

Cassidy. Very true—no one of any standing would wish to interfere with the English line of steamers.

Leech. Yes, it would be a disreputable thing to do, and be fatal to our interests.

Lawrence. Of course, it would—but to put the question of our interests altogether aside, think of the regard and loyalty we are bound to show towards Anglebury.

Leech. To be sure—I forgot that. It is a far more important consideration that our mere interests.

Foley. I repudiate it altogeher. What have we to be loyal for, I should like to know?

Lawrence. This is perfectly disgraceful coming from one of our Corporation. What have we to be loyal for? As if the reason were not patent to everyone!

Kirwan. Of course—because some of us have investments in the English line of steamers.

Foley. Mr. Mayor, long ago I considered that I had gauged to the bottom this controversy. By my article in the last number of the "Weekly Denouncer" I demonstrated the reckless municipal folly of which every member of our Corporation was guilty except myself. (*Sensation.*) My opinions on this question before us to-day, are well known; and if every member only could fall in with them, it would be easy to save our town. I am not going to stultify myself by pretending to be infallible. At the same time it is hard to think that those who don't agree with me are not mad—

Murphy. What an odd thing that you should be the only sane man in this town!

Foley. But don't you agree with me?

Murphy. Mr. Mayor, one moment—

Foley. I am in possession of the meeting.

Murphy (*shouting*). Mr. Mayor, I have some observations to make. (*There are cries among the Corporation and people for* Murphy *and* Foley. *Those for* Murphy *preponderate; and* Foley *sits down.*)

The Mayor (*thumping the table*). Silence, silence—

Murphy. Mr. Mayor, this matter before the Corporation would be easily settled if only we could agree to one thing. We must fight for the restoration of the American line of steamers to our town—

Lawrence. You want to ruin us by disseveering our connection with our English neighbours. Separatist principles mean ruin.

Murphy. Our town is ruined by Unionist principles.

The Mayor. Gentlemen, I cannot allow this wrangling.

Cloran. Ah, gentlemen, don't—

Cassidy. Mr. Mayor, I have long been convinced that we shall never obtain our rights until some one of family and position is made leader—

Leech. That's true, James—very true, James—(*Murmurs.*)

Cassidy. There is only one person in this town of sufficient position to lead. I ought to be the head of the family—

Murphy. Who the dickens cares for you or your family? (*Uproar.*)

The Mayor. Gentlemen, gentlemen, order—for goodness sake order—

Dean. Mr. Mayor, may I say a few words?

The Mayor Certainly, Alderman Dean—silence, gentlemen, please—

Dean. Mr. Mayor, if one so new at municipal business as I am, might presume to advise gentlemen so experienced, I would suggest that each of us should keep more strictly to the questions before us.

Kirwan. Hear, hear—

Dean. We have really nothing to do now with any question except whether we shall decide or not decide to enforce payment of what is due to us. All the other matters may be discussed again at their proper time. We must first run down the thief, and when we have recovered our property, each man may fight for whatever he wishes afterwards. (*Cheers.*) I am glad that, so far, all seem to be of my opinion.

Lawrence. Not all, by any means, Alderman Dean—

Murphy. Yes, all, except a few place-hunters—

Kirwan. Is our town to miss every advantage for the sake of a few officials? (*Cheers.*)

Dean. Mr. Mayor, we are the owners of property in this town. We have nothing to do with officials. What interest can it be to us whether this or that official is or is not making money by our connection with Anglebury? There is nothing particu-

larly interesting in the fact of other people making money. We ought therefore not to consider such people at all.

Lawrence. Alderman Dean, I'm afraid you're not a sound politician. I thought you were a different man, sir.

Dean. My only thoughts are for the general good of our town. (*Cheers.*) I hope our different representatives of popular feeling will be patient while I explain what I know to be the real interest of our citizens, and what our citizens will afterwards acknowledge as their best interest.

Lawrence. Well, what is this grand discovery?

Dean. It is that each of us should sink his particular plan of action in a combined effort for the general good of our town. (*Cheers.*)

Lawrence. We are far too independent for that.

Dean. It is because we are becoming so independent, that we see the necessity of being united. (*Cheers.*)

Murphy. Very true, very true—

Dean. Our aim must be that higher usefulness which is so necessary for spirited public action. We must for once cease to think of ourselves as individuals, and think of ourselves only as so many members belonging to the body of our town. (*Hear, hear.*) It is very encouraging to know that you agree with me. Well, then, admitting what I say is right, how ought you to meet the present crisis?

How do we stand in our public capacity? We are the Corporation of a Town unrivalled for it's natural advantages, and possessing the supreme fortune of being the nearest port in Europe to America. (*Hear, hear.*) Mr. Mayor, until some years ago we enjoyed the results of that good fortune. There was direct communication between our town and the United States. Our town was the most important packet station in the three Kingdoms. The American mails arriving here could be delivered in London much sooner than it was possible to deliver them when landed at any other port. Mr. Mayor, we were deprived of our American packet station. We were deprived of it by that English town which now enjoys the advantage in our stead. (*Groans.*) What ever are our differences of opinion, we must all agree to that. (*Hear, hear.*)

Lawrence. Mr. Mayor, I do not agree to it. I agree to nothing. (*Murmurs.*)

Dean. I need not dwell now upon the treachery of those among our Corporation who at that time took bribes from the English for their votes which deprived us of our packet station. They would never have dared to vote thus against the wishes and sentiments of our fellow-citizens, if it had not been for this indemnity which Anglebury then agreed to pay us, and which it was alleged would bring us such wealth as we never before enjoyed, even when in possession of our packet station. For it was agreed that we were to receive a percentage on all harbour rates in Anglebury, where the shipping was known to be enormous. Not one penny of that percentage or in-

demnity has ever since been paid. That is the state of affairs which we have met to consider to-day. (*Hear, hear.*) Many of us, Mr. Mayor, differ widely in our municipal opinions. For reasons which I need not enter into, several of my colleagues and I myself are now opposed to the agitation for restoring to our town her packet station. But there is one point upon which we all of us—even the most extreme of each section—agree as one man, and it is, that our rightful percentage should be paid to us.

Lawrence. Indeed, sir, what is really due ought to be paid. We are all agreed to that. But what is it that is really due? (*Oh, oh.*)

Dean. To hear Alderman Lawrence admit even so much, is satisfactory. Every citizen who has the interest of our town at heart must feel the justice of our claim, now that he has read the report of the Commission of Arbitration which Anglebury herself appointed to enquire into the merits of our dispute. What has the report of these finanical experts said, Mr. Mayor? It has said that for several years past we have been practically swindled out of a large sum of money.

Lawrence. Strong language, strong language, Mr. Mayor—

Murphy. Not one bit too strong—go on, Alderman Dean. We are all with you. (*Hear, hear, and cheers.*)

Dean. Well, Mr. Mayor, we have made several appeals to our rich debtor for payment. In what spirit has she received these appeals? We have all

heard her town clerk's last letter to-day. Is it a candid letter? Is it the answer of a town that wishes to act justly? (*No, no.*) Are we to be thus put off and played with by the stranger, while our town is daily impoverished by the stranger's defalcations? (*Tremendous cheers.*) No, sir, our free and independent Corporation, I am sure, will never consent to such treatment of our town. After all what have we but our town? Do we not stand or fall together? If she is ruined, will not we—yes, every class among us—be ruined also? (*Hear, hear.*) We must therefore cast to the winds that deference to England which makes us weak. We must be strong and self-sacrificing and ready to sink all our feelings of class and other differences in a firm resolve to unite for obtaining our just rights. We have only to agree upon taking legal proceedings, and the Law will very soon compel our debtor to disgorge—

Murphy. I'll unite with anyone to do that.

Foley. So will I, upon my honour and conscience.

Dean. Then let me appeal to all members of our Corporation to join hands. While we are disputing about one private interest or another, our town is fast sinking into hopeless decay. Nothing but united action to obtain this rich subsidy can save her fortunes.

Several Voices. We are all with you. We are all ready to unite.

Dean. I am overjoyed to hear it. For I look upon our obtaining this subsidy to be so necessary

that although, as you know, I am opposed to the restoration of the packet station now to our town, and have always with my family been a loyal supporter of our connection with Anglebury port, still, if the authorites in that port persist in denying us justice, and in casting us back upon civic ruin, then I for one do solemnly declare, that I am prepared to shake off all my loyalty towards so perfidious a people, and to fight till death for the existence of our beloved town. (*Tremendous and prolonged cheering and enthusiasm.*) Mr. Mayor, I beg to move that immediate legal proceedings be taken for the recovery of this debt of so many years' accumulation.

Murphy. I beg to second that resolution. (*Cheers.*)

Lawrence. Mr. Mayor, it is with very considerable pain that I have listened to the able speech of my respected and cultured young friend, Alderman Dean. I feel it is a disadvantage to all the respectable people of our town and a disadvantage to his own family that such rare abilities as his, should not be used in a cause more fit for reputable approbation. I feel that such abilities are eminently calculated to forward those most sacred principles of loyalty to Anglebury. Indeed my ears could hardly make me believe that he advocated action so discourteous towards a Corporation whose friendship is of paramount importance to us. (*Murmurs.*) I sincerely trust that our Corporation will do nothing to alienate the sympathy of our valued English friends. (*Uproar.*)

Several Voices. Put the resolution. Put the resolution.

Lawrence. Will I not be listened to?

Murphy. We have heard too much from you long ago.

Lawrence. Mr. Mayor, I protest. (*Uproar, during which he is forced to sit down.*)

Cassidy (*to* Leech). It is very extraordinary how Jasper has brought the Corporation with him.

Leech (*to* Cassidy). Most extraordinary—because he really hasn't much in him, you know.

Cassidy (*to* Leech). I think his arguments quite wrong. However, I suppose we cannot go against such an unanimous burst of civic opinion.

Leech (*to* Cassidy). Oh, no—besides he is one of the family; and it wouldn't look well if we took an active part in opposing him.

The Mayor. Let all who are in favour of the resolution say "aye."

Several Voices. Aye, aye—

The Mayor. The contrary say "no."

Lawrence. No—(*Laughter.*)

The Mayor. The "ayes" have it. (*Taking out his watch.*) We shall catch the four o'clock tram-car after all. (*Laughter and wild excitement—several gather with congratulations around* Jasper Dean, *while all move out of the room.*)

Curtain.

ACT SECOND.

(*Drawing-room in* Jasper Dean's *house.*)

(The Misses Caroline *and* Arabella Dean *are seated by an afternoon tea-table.*)

Arabella. Is it not time that Millicent arrived, Caroline?

Caroline. She should be here now very soon.

Arabella. And Jasper not here—won't she think it odd if he is not at home to receive her when she comes?

Caroline. Millicent Fell is a sensible girl, Arabella, and knows that the administration of our town is more important to an alderman than even the welcoming of his intended bride. Jasper, no doubt, has much to transact at the Corporation on this his first day of civic life.

Arabella. I hope he will mind his health and keep always on the winning side.

Caroline. Arabella, you are in the habit of talking irrelevantly. The one important thing is that Jasper should take a leading position in the government of our town.

Arabella. I am sure I should like our dear nephew to do what suited him best. Ever since he lost his parents and came under our care, my one thought has always been for the happiness of our brother's child.

Caroline. Of course—I know that. However you don't seem to realise what his wealth and education entitle him to. Arabella, he should become the leader in our municipal deliberations.

Arabella. I hope they won't cause him trouble.

Caroline. Cause him trouble?—no, the Corporation will be quite different when he has infused into it that higher tone, he speaks of.

Arabella. What sort of a thing is "higher tone," Caroline?

Caroline. Oh, you know what it is, of course, Arabella. Jasper is always talking about it, since he went to Oxford. It is the higher tone, you know. Something superior and English you know—wait—I hear people coming.

(*Enter* Mrs. Belle Cassidy *and* Mrs. Sarah Leech.)

Mrs. Cassidy. Caroline, we thought we should find Jasper at home. We want to hear about his first experience at the Corporation.

Mrs. Leech. Indeed that wasn't what brought you here at all, Belle.

Mrs. Cassidy. I don't understand you, Sarah.

Arabella. We expect Jasper at any time.

Caroline. But what is Sarah hinting at?

Mrs. Cassidy. Goodness only knows. She is always making a history out of nothing.

Mrs. Leech. You know you have come on a visit of inspection, Belle.

Mrs. Cassidy. Inspection of what—?

Mrs. Leech. Why, the bride-elect, of course—is she here, Caroline? Where are you hiding her? (*She screams with laughter.*)

Caroline. Millicent has not yet arrived. The boat was late; so she missed the early train from Dublin this morning.

Arabella. But she has telegraphed that she is coming by a later one. She will be here this afternoon.

Mrs. Cassidy. Oh, then, it is likely we may see her.

Mrs. Leech. I wonder what she is like.

Arabella. We have never seen her. But Jasper raves about her.

Caroline. You know, of course, that he became engaged to her when he was in England. She is the niece of Mr. George Hardman, the Mayor of Anglebury, which, they say, owes us this subsidy.

Mrs. Leech. How very queer—perhaps the wedding may lead to a settlement of the question?

Caroline. A good marriage usually settles everything, Sarah.

Mrs. Cassidy. What sense you always have, Caroline!

Mrs. Leech. You both must be dying of curiosity to see her.

Caroline. We are most anxious to become acquainted with her; and it is for that very purpose that Jasper has asked her over to stay with us.

Mrs. Cassidy. Of course, Caroline—what could

be more natural than that he should be anxious for your approval of his choice?

Caroline. He need not fear that we shall not appreciate her; for she is an heiress with a fine fortune. Besides, by the most trustworthy accounts, she is a very superior English girl.

Arabella. And an ardent and earnest politician too—so Jasper says.

Mrs. Leech. Oh my gracious—that means a radical, doesn't it?

Caroline. Sarah, the English radicals are now quite respectable.

Mrs. Leech. Well, I suppose you understand all about it.

Mrs. Cassidy. Yes—Caroline always understands and has such care for the credit of our family, likewise.

Mrs. Leech. That's a hit at me. Do you hear her, Caroline? What have I done?

Caroline. Don't ask me, Sarah. Ask your conscience.

Mrs. Leech. One would think I was a stranger who had come into the family, and not a first cousin to my husband and sister to Belle's husband, and, I may say, some sort of cousin more or less near to all the rest of the family. And then again think of Belle being sister to my husband and first cousin to me, and our husbands first cousins to each other—think of all that, and isn't it queer that she should find such fault with me.

Arabella. I suppose it is the privilege of near relationship, my dear.

Mrs. Cassidy. No—but I am greatly distressed at Sarah's general want of dignity. It seems extraordinary in a person who, after all, is so much one of the family.

Caroline. I should have thought that one would feel more impressed by the fact of belonging to such a family.

Mrs. Cassidy. It is not everyone has your sense, Caroline.

Mrs. Leech. Ah, I am afraid she has too much.

Caroline. One cannot have too much.

Mrs. Leech. You will do something very foolish soon, Caroline.

Arabella. Ha, ha, that is what I have always thought.

Caroline. That is what the foolish always say to persons of sense.

Mrs. Leech. Is it a sensible thing, Caroline, at your age to think of getting married?

Caroline. Who ever said I thought of such a thing? How dare you, Sarah Leech?

Arabella. Goodness, gracious, we're going to have a family quarrel.

Mrs. Cassidy. Sarah, you have no right to make such insinuations about Caroline.

Mrs. Leech. Ah—I didn't know there was any harm. She has so much money, you know; and all

the family have been talking of her and Alderman Foley—

Mrs. Cassidy. Hold your tongue, Sarah Leech. Don't mind her, Caroline. I never mentioned your name with that of Alderman Foley. Never—I wouldn't do such a thing, Caroline.

Caroline. You are always most inaccurate in your assertions, Sarah Leech. You have even less sense than Arabella, with all your mischievous cunning.

Mrs. Cassidy. It is not everyone has your sense, Caroline. Jasper was indeed fortunate to have found a guardian in you.

Arabella. I am sure the luck was all on our side. The dear boy has been such a source of happiness to us.

Caroline. Yes, Arabella, in spite of all you have done to spoil him—

Mrs. Leech. Never mind, Caroline. *You* made up for all Arabella's spoiling by your lecturing of him.

Caroline. I don't understand such impertinent remarks, Sarah. It was my duty to direct his education, and form his mind to a sense of his family responsibilities.

Mrs. Cassidy. Of course, Caroline—and now you must feel much satisfaction with the result of all.

Caroline. I hope I have rendered him fit to take the lead in our municipal life, Belle.

Mrs. Leech. If he really is what you want to make him, Caroline, I'm afraid he'll never take the lead any where.

(*A loud knocking at the street door and a violent ringing of the bell are heard.*)

Mrs. Leech. That must be she.

(The Maid *enters.*)

The Maid. Miss Fell.

(Miss Millicent Fell *enters.* *Exit* The Maid.)

Caroline (*to* Millicent). We are delighted to see you, my dear.

Millicent. Thank you. You are very kind. How do you do? (*To* Arabella.) How do you do?

Arabella. These are our cousins, Mrs. Belle Cassidy and Mrs. Sarah Leech.

Millicent. How do you do? How do you do?

Mrs. Leech (*aside to* Mrs. Cassidy). Look at her. Isn't she very queer? Did you ever see such clothes?

Mrs. Cassidy. She has an emphatic manner, Sarah.

Mrs. Leech. Yes, she said, "How do you do?" as if the fate of the world depended upon it.

Arabella. Jasper says you are very fond of Ireland, Miss Millicent.

Millicent. Oh yes, I love dear Ireland, and the dear Irish.

Caroline. How very fortunate for Jasper my dear.

Arabella. Jasper is the head of our family.

Mrs. Cassidy. Well, he certainly is by primogeniture, although there is another more qualified in many ways to lead.

Arabella. Belle, you and your husband were always jealous of Jasper.

Caroline. That will do now. He happens to be the head. And his education gives him a further right to take the lead.

Mrs. Leech. But what thing is he to take the lead in, Caroline?

Caroline. He is to take the lead, Sarah; and if you had any sense of the family dignity, you wouldn't always ask such questions.

(*Enter* Aldermen James Cassidy *and* Michael Leech.)

Cassidy (*perceiving* Millicent). Oh, Michael, what a remarkable fine woman—

Leech. You're right, James. She is. What taste you have!

Caroline. James, this is Miss Millicent Fell.

Millicent (*to* Cassidy *and* Leech). How do you do? How do you do?

Cassidy. You must find our town, Miss Fell, rather poor looking after your handsome opulent English cities.

Millicent. Oh, I think it is charming. I think everything you do is so charming.

Leech. We do our best though conscious of our inferiority.

Cassidy. We are doing our best to introduce your grand English customs into our town.

Mrs. Cassidy (*approvingly*). Have you come from the Corporation, James?

Cassidy. Yes, yes—the proceedings are finished.

Arabella. I wonder Jasper isn't here.

Cassidy (*laughing*). Oh, Jasper—he has been carrying all before him.

Caroline. Why—what has he done? How has he comported himself?

Cassidy. He has succeeded in uniting for once the whole Corporation.

Leech. Yes—it seems a wonderful thing; but he has done it. I am sure no one ever would have thought he could.

Caroline. Ha—I thought so. You see my training has already borne fruit.

Millicent. I always knew he only wanted an opportunity to prove himself great.

Arabella. He was always great.

Caroline. No, Arabella, he was great only after the education I gave him.

Cassidy. What a sensible woman Caroline always is.

Leech. Yes—sound common sense, James—sound common sense—

Millicent. Oh I hate reservations in admira-

tion. Why should we not say what we feel is so?

Mrs. Leech. Because we may afterwards be disappointed perhaps.

Cassidy. You have, doubtless, had many opportunities, Miss Fell, of judging the abilities of Jasper.

Millicent. Yes—we have been acquainted in England for some time.

Caroline. Jasper has made some advantageous acquaintances at Oxford, you know.

Millicent. My cousin, George Hardman, junior, was a friend of his there. He brought him during one vacation to stay at his father's, the mayor's house. That is how I first met Jasper.

Caroline. You always live at Anglebury with your uncle, the mayor. Don't you, my dear?

Millicent. Oh, yes—he is like a father to me.

Mrs. Leech. Better than many fathers, I should think, when he has found so good a husband for you.

Millicent. Found a husband for me—I don't understand you.

Mrs. Leech. Oh, then, you found him for yourself. She is an independent young lady. Isn't she, Caroline?

Caroline. Sarah, you forget you are one of the family.

Cassidy. Sarah, you are perpetually saying the most embarrassing things.

(*A noise of voices is heard outside.*)

Arabella. Here is Jasper coming.

(*Enter* Aldermen Jasper Dean *and* Ralf Kirwan.)

Dean (*at the door to* Kirwan). That's just it. Don't you see? We'll have them in such terror now that they must give in to us. (*Perceiving* Millicent *and advancing.*) Millicent, how glad I am to see you! When did you arrive? How are you?

Millicent. I am very well, Jasper. So you have made a most successful first appearance at the Corporation.

Dean. Indeed I have. This is my friend, Alderman Kirwan. Let me introduce you, Millicent.

Kirwan (*bowing*). He has exceeded our wildest expectations, Miss Fell.

Dean. Would you believe it the whole Corporation has risen, like one man, to my speech? Now I lead the town.

Millicent. I do not wonder. This was bound to happen some day.

Dean (*amorously*). Millicent, I have longed that some day you might feel proud of me.

Millicent (*with great tenderness*). Oh, Jasper, I am so proud of you.

Caroline. And now, my dear Jasper, you must tell us exactly how it all happened.

Arabella. Yes, we are dying to hear from your own mouth the narrative of your triumph.

Millicent. Do tell us Jasper, how it all happened. What was the question that led to your success?

Dean. Oh, the simplest question in the world—

Kirwan. In fact so simple that it is surprising no one else ever made a success of it before—

Millicent. Ah, Alderman Kirwan, you require genius to show the way.

Mrs. Cassidy. Well, let us hear what the question was.

Mrs. Leech. Yes, indeed—I wonder none of you ever thought of asking that before.

Kirwan. To be sure—that is the way with you ladies. You always leave the most important matter for the postcript.

Mrs. Leech. Oh, you musn't include me, Alderman Kirwan. I thought of it. But as they generally snub me, I was afraid to ask.

Dean. I thought you all knew that to-day the Corporation were to consider our claims against Anglebury.

Millicent. Oh, I have often heard my uncle speak about this. He says there is nothing in your claims.

Dean. He says that; does he?

Millicent. Yes—why Jasper?

Dean. Because to-day our Corporation had to consider a letter on our claims from the town clerk of Anglebury.

Millicent. I suppose this letter explained the whole matter.

Dean. Well, the curious thing about it was that it explained nothing at all.

Mrs. Cassidy. How very odd—!

Dean. In fact none of us could make out what it meant.

Kirwan. Except, vaguely, that we had nothing to expect in satisfaction of our claims—

Leech. Yes—I think the Corporation seemed somehow convinced of that.

Kirwan. Convinced or not they were hopelessly at variance about what course to pursue, until our friend here united and directed their energies by a most effective speech.

Cassidy. That is very true.

Leech. No one can deny that, James.

Arabella. How noble of you, Jasper—!

Caroline. What did you say, Jasper, that it should succeed so wonderfully in uniting the Corporation?

Dean. Oh, I simply explained that we had a legal right to the payment of our claims which the report of the Commission had strengthened and defined; and then I vehemently urged that the law should be set in motion to enforce this payment.

Kirwan. It seems very simple; doesn't it?

Cassidy. Yes, indeed—and the wonder is that no one ever before could do what he has done.

Caroline. None of the rest have his education. See the magnificent education that I gave him.

Kirwan. Pshaw—education had nothing to do with it. The more of this quack modern education,

the worse discernment, the worse literature, the worse taste—

Mrs. Leech. What does he mean? None of us can understand him.

Cassidy (*evasively*). Oh, Kirwan, questions of literature and taste have never been subjects of serious attention to the *elite* of our town.

Kirwan. Then what is all the education for?

Caroline. Education should lead to practical results—not to things of such mere sentiment as you mention. They are unworthy of a person of sense.

Kirwan. What do you mean by practical results?

Caroline. Oh, you know what they are. The obtaining of appointments, for instance—

Mrs. Leech. Yes, indeed—but for appointments I should like to know what would be the use of any education.

Dean. Sarah, you have often a crude way of expressing what is dimly in the minds of the family.

Mrs. Cassidy. Sarah is unfortunately a great trial to us all.

Mrs. Leech. Ah—there I am snubbed again, and I said nothing more than Caroline said, after all.

Caroline. You are greatly mistaken, Sarah. I would not limit the usefulness of education merely to obtaining appointments. I think a most legitimate outcome of its usefulness consists in its fitting a man to take the lead amongst his fellows.

Mrs. Cassidy (*tentatively*). James, don't you

think that others, perhaps, might have hesitated before they sought leadership by the *means* which Jasper used?

Leech. Well indeed, I must confess the same idea crossed my mind too.

Millicent. I was waiting to see if anyone had doubts about these means.

Caroline (*to* Millicent). What, my dear—aren't you satisfied?

Millicent. Well you know it *was* a strong measure.

Cassidy. So I thought at the time.

Caroline. Did you? Well if you did, why didn't you prevent Jasper? What is the use of your pretending to lead, if you could not do even that much for the family?

Mrs. Leech. I knew Jasper's action would soon be criticised by the family.

Kirwan. Well, I can tell you all that he has done a splendid work.

Dean. Yes, it is splendid for the first time to feel one's power. It is splendid to put one's soul into men, and make them act to forward one's most cherished ideas. Isn't it so, Millicent? But why are you looking so solemn?

Millicent (*with a faint smile*). Oh, Jasper—of course, I desire everything that is for your good.

Dean. And don't you think my success to-day for my good?

Millicent. Well, I don't know. It is all so sudden.

Dean. Oh, come, let us have no hesitations. I am in such spirits this evening.

Kirwan. I hope nothing will happen to damp your spirits.

Dean. I shall not allow anything to do so, I can tell you.

Caroline. Don't you think, Jasper, you had better consider before you do anything rash.

Dean. Don't be afraid, Aunt Caroline. I shall do nothing rash. Come, Kirwan, to the study. I want to show you the rough draft I have made of a letter which our solicitor can send to Anglebury.

(*Exeunt* Jasper Dean *and* Ralf Kirwan.)

Caroline. James, I wonder you did not tell us at once what this question was.

Cassidy. You mean the question upon which Jasper took the lead.

Caroline. Of course—

Cassidy. Oh, I forgot at the moment. It didn't seem necessary somehow.

Leech. We thought, Caroline, that you knew there was to be a discussion about our claims against Anglebury.

Cassidy. Besides, I believed the only thing you would be interested to know was that Jasper took the lead.

Mrs. Cassidy. Yes indeed, Caroline, you always have been saying that he must take the lead.

Caroline. To be sure I have. At the same

time it is essential that the means by which he is to take the lead, should be considered.

Mrs. Leech. Ah, that is something new. Fancy, something new from Caroline—

Mrs. Cassidy. To be sure we have never heard Caroline say this before, although she has often said that Jasper should lead.

Caroline. But of course the importance of the means being strictly respectable was always understood.

Mrs. Leech. Isn't it queer that so important a matter should only have been understood? Fancy, I have caught Caroline. (*She laughs immoderately.*)

Caroline (*furious*). Sarah, I wonder you are not ashamed to make such an exhibition of yourself.

Mrs. Cassidy. Come away, Sarah. You have no idea of behaving with dignity.

Leech. Yes—on the whole we had better go.

Cassidy. Good-bye Caroline. Of course a woman like you could not fail to have considered always the importance of the means.

Leech. Of course Caroline's judgment is never at fault.

(*Exeunt amidst general leave takings* Alderman James Cassidy, Mrs. Cassidy, Alderman Michael Leech, *and* Mrs. Leech.)

Millicent. I do not feel comfortable about Jasper.

Caroline. You mean about this action he has taken to-day.

MILLICENT. Yes—I wonder will it lead to a breach with his English friends.

ARABELLA. Why should it? Why should people quarrel with him because he does what he thinks right?

CAROLINE (*not heeding her*). I wonder will they resent it.

MILLICENT. It would be dreadful if they did. It would ruin his prospects.

CAROLINE. Do you really think so, my dear?

MILLICENT. We should be completely ostracised in England, and should be obliged to live over here altogether.

ARABELLA. You ought not to think that a misfortune, my dear. You who love dear Ireland and the dear Irish—

MILLICENT. Oh yes, a misfortune, of course—

CAROLINE. It would be dreadful for his family, if Jasper were in any way to incur the disapprobation of any respectable friends.

ARABELLA. The family, the family again—that's all you think of. What is the family compared to Jasper himself?

CAROLINE. I am afraid, Arabella, your excitement is getting beyond your control.

(*Exit* ARABELLA *in a temper.*)

MILLICENT. I wish I could be certain what is best to do.

CAROLINE. Does your uncle, the mayor, know of this resolution of our Corporation?

MILLICENT. Not yet, I should think—

Caroline. Perhaps, my dear, you might write to him. Just say that Jasper has no intention of acting in a hostile manner against Anglebury.

Millicent. Would it be safe to say that? Perhaps I had better telegraph the bare facts to him at once.

Caroline. Perhaps that would be best. There are forms of telegram there on the writing-table.

Millicent (*as she writes*). I should not be surprised if this telegram brought him over here at once.

Caroline. I'm sure I hope it may. His presence and advice would be of great advantage to us in this emergency.

Curtain.

ACT THIRD.

(*The same scene as in the last act.*)

(*Enter* Aldermen Jasper Dean *and* Valentine Foley.)

Foley. Well—I will just come in for a moment. I cannot stay long now.

Dean. Why—where have you to go?

Foley. I was hurrying to the office of the "Weekly Denouncer" when you stopped me.

Dean. Oh, wait a while. I want to speak to you about this public meeting.

Foley. I suppose you know it is settled to take place the day after to-morrow. You have heard of our solicitor's letter: haven't you?

Dean. I should think so. He lost no time in writing to the English corporation. That was good business, Foley.

Foley. Yes—the letter was a fine plain-spoken one.

Dean. We are really united at last.

Foley. We are, and have the law on our side as well: so we will force those stubborn English down on their knees.

Dean. My goodness, what an awakening this will be to them!

Foley. They have always counted on our disunion for doing whatever they wished to our town.

Dean. Very true—it was time that this fatal disunion should cease. Have you written your article yet ?

Foley. I have, and upon my honour and conscience, I think I have exposed the whole situation in a convincing light.

Dean. I am glad to hear it. You are a power, Foley.

Foley. Power—what is my power to yours ? What an enviable position, Dean, you have got yourself into !

Dean. I don't know. It will require a great effort to keep up to the level of the work.

Foley. If only I had your luck in hitting upon this vein, I wouldn't much mind what effort the work entailed.

Dean. Oh, my dear fellow, the strain may become almost unbearable.

Foley. You don't mean to say you are already beginning to tire of the work.

Dean. No—no, Foley, of course not—I only mean that I hope I shall be able to keep all of you united, and as enthusiastic for the cause as I am myself. That is all.

Foley. Never fear us. Upon my honour and conscience, we shall stand by you to a man. At this monster meeting of our citizens when you are to be in the chair—

Dean. Who said I was to be in the chair ?

Foley. Why, who else could be in the chair?

We wish this meeting to be unanimous as an expression of our citizens' approval. Nothing short of that will give the Corporation full confidence in its action. What better man could we have in the chair than he who united the Corporation ?

Dean. Oh—if you put it that way, of course I shall take the chair.

(Millicent Fell *enters.*)

Millicent. Fancy the news I have for you, Jasper—

Dean. What can it be, Millicent?

Millicent. My uncle is coming here to-day.

Dean. Mayor Hardman from England—?

Millicent. Yes, he sent a telegram saying he will arrive by the mail this morning.

Dean. I shall be very glad to see him.

Foley. He must have learned very quickly the news here.

Millicent (*to* Dean). This gentleman—what does he say?

Foley. Oh—nothing—nothing, I assure you Miss—

Dean. Millicent, let me introduce my friend Alderman Valentine Foley to you. He is the proprietor and editor of the "Weekly Denouncer," and is our ablest man on the Press.

Millicent. To be an able man on the Press is to personify everything that is beautiful in modern civilization, Alderman Foley.

Foley (*modestly*). Well—the Press does give somehow distinction to even the most ordinary man.

Millicent. It should be an efficient means for intellectualising your town.

Foley (*suddenly inspired*). Miss Fell, what an intellectual influence you might be to us!

Dean. Like the most earnest of her townspeople she is in deep sympathy with our town.

Millicent. I really do love your town you know.

Foley. Miss Fell, I have heard of your riches. I now see you are rich in sympathy also.

Millicent. Sympathy is of greater value than money.

Foley. Yes—I always have thought that. Upon my honour and conscience I really despise money.

Dean. Such a sentiment is sure to make an impression on so generous a nature as that of Miss Fell.

Foley (*ardently*). My fondest dream would be to make a favourable impression on Miss Fell.

Millicent. Gracious, what do you mean?

Foley. I would not stultify myself by pretending to deny how proud I should feel to stand in the good graces of such a lady. Good-bye Miss Fell. I hope I may be honoured by meeting you soon again. I must go to my office, Dean, and have the programme for the meeting printed at once. Good-bye for the present. (*Exit.*)

MILLICENT. That's a very forward fellow. He gives me the idea of an adventurer. Oh, Jasper, you are so superior to those people around you. My uncle has such a high opinion of you.

DEAN. I hope I shall never disappoint either of you. But tell me, Millicent, why is your uncle coming here so suddenly?

MILLICENT. Shall I tell you? Well—I will be straightforward. Yes—we English are a straightforward people. Well, I telegraphed to him yesterday evening.

DEAN. *You* telegraphed to him?

MILLICENT. Yes, Jasper—don't be angry.

DEAN. I am not angry. Only surprised—but why did you do this?

MILLICENT. I was guided by my woman's instinct, Jasper.

DEAN. Explain. I do not understand.

MILLICENT. Something told me that you were going to act injuriously to yourself.

DEAN. To myself—?

MILLICENT. Yes—are you not taking part in a movement against our town? Is not that injurious to you?

DEAN. I don't see it.

MILLICENT. Well, anyhow I thought it best that you should have the benefit of my uncle's advice. He is such an able man, and you know how high an opinion he has of you.

DEAN. As I said before I shall be very glad to

see him. It will be interesting to hear what he has to say. I am sure his sense of justice will force him to acknowledge our claims.

Millicent. I am sure he would be the last person to do anything unjust.

Dean. When he comes, you will soon see that I am not acting injuriously to myself.

Millicent. I hope so.

Dean. You will see this difficulty arranged, Millicent. You need not fear that I will do anything to make me less worthy of you.

Millicent. No, no, Jasper, I am not thinking for a moment of such a thing.

Dean. As it is I am not worthy of you, nor ever could be: but I shall always try not to become less so.

Millicent. Jasper, you have a noble nature. It is because I admire your character and talents that I am now so anxious. I would not for worlds you did the slightest thing to tarnish them.

Dean. There is really no necessity for all this fear, Millicent.

Millicent. In this movement you are surrounded by so many adventurers.

Dean. Indeed I beg your pardon. I am surrounded by the most considerable men in the town. But, Millicent, let us not talk about these subjects. You are my chief interest in life. Let me hear about you and your interests.

Millicent. My greatest interest is your welfare, Jasper.

(Miss Caroline Dean *enters.*)

Caroline. Oh—I am interrupting an agreeable conversation. I shall retire.

Dean. Not at all, Aunt Caroline, not at all—it is time for me to go to my committee meeting now. I shall not be long away, Millicent. (*Exit.*)

Caroline. I hope you have been reasoning with him, my dear.

Millicent. I tried to; but he seemed not to mind me.

Caroline. I am sorry to say his manners are not of the best.

Millicent. Oh, I think they are very well.

Caroline. Is it his manners? No, my dear, I regret that with all his education, he has never acquired the art of making himself agreeable to the ladies.

Millicent. So much the better, Miss Dean—I am sure I don't know what you would have him do.

Caroline. It is hard, of course, to lay down special rules. But generally speaking he is too serious—too candid. He is not sufficiently gay and complimentary.

Millicent. So much the better—one cannot do better than be perfectly natural.

Caroline. If one merely follows nature one becomes a perfect savage. No—one must cultivate

the graces. I could never teach him to enter a room properly, my dear. He never would learn to bow and smile pleasantly at the door when coming in. He never was ready with repartee, and light persiflage. It is such brilliancy that dazzles the eyes of the ladies.

Millicent. I don't want him to do such things at all. They are quite unnecessary.

Caroline. It's well you think so my dear; for I suppose you would now find it hard to change him. He has become more and more undisciplined of late.

Millicent. Indeed I am afraid he is being urged on by a band of adventurers.

Caroline. Where it will end goodness knows! Just imagine the misfortune if he were to sully his family's reputation for respectability.

Millicent. I really don't know what to think. It will be a great relief when my uncle arrives.

Caroline. From what I hear of his ability and sense, I should certainly like to consult him.

Millicent. He ought to be hear now at any moment.

Caroline (*goes to the window*). Yes the train has arrived. I see them wheeling the mails to the post-office. (*A bell is heard to ring.*) Ah—the hall-door bell—this must be he.

(The Maid *enters.*)

The Maid. Mr. Hardman, ma'am.

(George Hardman *enters.* *Exit* The Maid.)

Hardman. My dear Millicent—

Millicent. I am so glad you have come. This is Miss Caroline Dean.

Hardman. Miss Dean, you are, if I mistake not, our friend Jasper's gifted and devoted Aunt Caroline, who has done so much to make him what he is.

Caroline. Oh Mr. Hardman this is too great praise from such a noted judge of character as you are.

Hardman. I say no more than what common report says.

Caroline. And common report says you have wonderful discrimination for public affairs.

Hardman. I have had great experience, my good lady—great experience. That is all.

Millicent. Uncle, dear, we have need of all your experience in this affair of Jasper.

Hardman. You are right, my dear. I feel it is a serious business. I just left my things at the hotel and hurried across to consult at once.

Caroline. We are anxious to have your advice. What is thought of the matter?

Hardman. Well—your telegram, Millicent, caused a great shock to us.

Millicent. And to think that Jasper should have been the cause of bringing about this decision of the Corporation—

Caroline. What is your opinion of this decision, Mr. Hardman?

Hardman. I think it will bring ruin and discredit upon your good town.

Caroline. I am glad to hear you say so, Mr. Hardman.

Millicent. Glad, Miss Dean—?

Caroline. Yes, because your uncle's opinion was mine from the first.

Hardman. Oh there can be no doubt about what I say. Don't you see how your town must suffer, if her business connection with Anglebury is in any way injured?

Caroline. I quite agree with you. For where does she obtain fashion, wealth, or importance except from Anglebury?

Hardman. How could the business of this good town subsist by itself?

Caroline. It is surely much more honourable for our commercial life to be connected with your's, than for it to seek a precarious and petty independence.

Hardman. What admirable common sense—! How seldom a woman is found with such grasp of a situation!

Caroline. Ah, Mr Hardman, my life has been passed in managing affairs of all kinds.

Hardman. It is easy to see in the brilliant Jasper Dean the influence of a modern Cornelia.

Caroline. If Jasper were only to hear you speak, I feel certain that he would be led by you.

Hardman. I must see Jasper. I must see the others. I must reason with them. Like every Radical I have a great belief in argument.

MILLICENT. Oh how delightful it will be to have an argument! I do love argument for its own sake!

CAROLINE. I am sure, my dear, you have a great deal to say to your uncle: so I will leave you for the present. Mr. Hardman will, of course, stay for lunch.

HARDMAN. You are very kind.

CAROLINE. Till then you will excuse me. (*Exit*).

HARDMAN. A very worthy old lady—

MILLICENT. She seems much afraid that Jasper will injure himself.

HARDMAN. And she is right, my dear. You did well to inform me at once of his mischevious conduct.

MILLICENT. You frighten me. Do you think it so very serious?

HARDMAN. Do *you* think he may be brought to reason?

MILLICENT. I am sure I don't know. He seems very determined.

HARDMAN. I suppose you are aware, Millicent, that if he persists, he will be banished from all social and political life in Anglebury.

MILLICENT. Yes uncle, I feel that what you say is true.

HARDMAN. Are you prepared to share his banishment, Millicent?

MILLICENT. I love Jasper. You know I have promised to marry him.

Hardman. I know, my dear. That is all very well. But are you prepared to relinquish the whole of your active political life, and social influence in Anglebury, and to bury yourself for the rest of your days in Ireland? Are you prepared to do this? For this is what it means.

Millicent. It would certainly be a dreadful wrench in my life.

Hardman. I should think it would indeed. Why your career which has begun so well, would come to a premature and ignominious end. What use to you is your Girton education and those ideas about the higher mission of woman, if you are going to sever all your political ties and sink into obscurity?

Millicent. Oh, uncle, why prophesy such a miserable fate for me?

Hardman. I am only stating sober fact, Millicent. It therefore behoves you to get Jasper off this work of his, as soon as possible.

Millicent. But if he won't—?

Hardman. I have confidence in you, my child. I know you will act prudently. Let us hope there will be no necessity for us to consider the possibility of his refusal. He is devoted to you; and you could persuade him to do what none other could.

Millicent. I am afraid I shall never be able to persuade him in this matter. He is so much convinced that he has justice on his side.

Hardman. But you must prove to him that he hasn't.

Millicent. That is not easy, when he is so clever, and well informed on the whole question.

Hardman. I don't care how clever and well informed he may be, if he has not right on his side.

Millicent. Do you really believe uncle that he is not in the right?

Hardman. Why, of course I do, my dear. Is it not the present wish of our municipality and citizens to do justice to this town?

Millicent. Yes, justice to our Irish neighbours is now the cry with us in England.

Hardman. Yes—justice, of course, in all things where our town has nothing to lose or suffer—

Millicent. Oh in that case I perfectly see how Jasper can not have justice on his side.

Hardman. You understnd, Millicent that if it were a question of one party or class in this town being benefited by us at the expense of another party or class, then, of course we should not hesitate to do justice. But to expect us to be at any loss ourselves in the matter—well, that is outside of practical sense, you know.

Millicent. Yes—we are full of sympathy with our Irish neighbours. We really and truly love Ireland. But we must above all things remember that we are English, and as English we must in no circumstances whatever injure the least of our interests. Is not that our position, uncle?

Hardman. That is truly our position, child. We are a conscientious people with a manly sense of justice and fair play.

Millicent. And still I cannot understand why other nations will persist in vilifying us.

Hardman. It is perfectly simple, my dear. Don't you see that the fate of all philanthrophists—whether nations, corporations, or individuals—is to be misunderstood at first.

Millicent. But it seems to me that we are always misunderstood here.

Hardman (*throwing up his hands*). What a country—! what a country—! the more we English try to understand Ireland, the more sacrifices we make for her, the more ungrateful and difficult she becomes. But we must be patient, and go on doing such good solid work to benefit this town as we have steadily done in the past.

Millicent. Yes—I clearly see how unjustifiable is this agitation which Jasper has stirred up.

Hardman. Of course—besides, Millicent, supposing the claims of this town were really just, do you think for a moment our ratepayers would consent to the extra rate which the payment of those claims would impose on them? Why, if our Aldermen were to suggest such a thing, they would never again be elected to the Corporation.

Millicent. As if you could expect men to relinquish their municipal position for any principal however just—

Hardman. Don't you understand, then, how the whole movement is quite outside the domain of practical politics? It would be fatal for you, my dear, to identify yourself in any way with it.

Millicent. Oh to think that Jasper whom I love, should involve me in such misfortune—!

Hardman. You must not allow him to, Millicent. You can change him, you *must*—

Millicent. But how, uncle—?

Hardman. If he knows that you are not prepared to share the life he is fashioning for himself—

Millicent. Oh that life would be dreadful.

Hardman. Very well then—he will do anything rather than lose you. You must arrange this matter at once. Can you see him soon?

Millicent. I think so. He ought to be here soon again.

(The Maid *enters followed by* Alderman Foley. *Exit* The Maid.)

Hardman. I want to put some of my papers and things in order at the hotel, and will return after a while to lunch.

Millicent. Alderman Foley, this is my uncle, Mr Hardman.

Hardman (*shaking hands with* Foley). I am proud to meet you, sir. How do you do ?

Foley. You are welcome to our town, Mr Hardman. We shall make your path easy to tread over here. I will see to that.

Hardman. You will—

Millicent. Alderman Foley owns and edits the "Weekly Denouncer."

Hardman. Oh—of course—I know—

Foley. You were going to your hotel. Well, don't let me detain you. I know you have business.

Hardman. Oh nothing that cannot wait—I am delighted to have an opporunity of conversing with you, Alderman Foley.

Foley. There—my dear sir—another time—you had better go to your hotel now. It is all right, I assure you. I shall see you very soon again.

Hardman. Agreed then, Alderman Foley. I hope we shall meet soon again. Millicent, try to have that matter settled before I return. (*Exit.*)

Foley. I hear Jasper Dean is not at home. Do you know when he is likely to return ?

Millicent. He said he would be here when his committee meeting was over.

Foley. Ah—committees and office work—how delightful is the atmosphere of this place after such sordid drugery !

Millicent. Do you think so, Alderman Foley ? I consider committees always interesting.

Foley. Well, I find women are never so charming as when we men come from some dry, ugly, occupation, such as economics, politics, or law. That is why lawyers and the like are so fascinated by female society.

Millicent. I must say I always preferred men of the recognised professions.

Foley. Yes—they are certainly preferable to the others—to poets and men of letters for instance who are occupied with such sublunary visions, that

female society, instead of being a delightful relief, would seem to them—well something quite the opposite.

Millicent. Poets and men of letters aren't, somehow, of much practical use to women. I know I always disliked them. Their work, for one thing, doesn't lead to salaried appointments.

Foley. But journalists are not men of letters, I am proud to say.

Millicent. No—journalism is one of the recognised professions.

Foley. Then I am proud to be a journalist. I am proud to belong to a profession that gives me a right to your approbation.

Millicent. You are too complimentary, Alderman Foley.

Foley. Impossible to one so adorable as you are——

Millicent. I do not understand you.

Foley (*kneeling*). I mean, I adore you. Will you accept my heart and hand?

Millicent. Alderman Foley, are you mad?

Foley. Yes madly in love with you—

Millicent. But aren't you aware that I am engaged to marry Alderman Dean?

Foley. Oh—that is only detail. You can change your mind.

Millicent. Sir, you offend me. I shall not stay in the room an instant longer.

Foley. Do you mean to say you absolutely refuse me?

Millicent. Of course I do. If you don't go away, I shall scream.

(Alderman Jasper Dean *enters. She rushes to him.* Foley *rises quickly and strikes an attitude.*)

Dean. What is all this about?

Millicent. Oh Jasper he has dared to propose to me.

Dean. What audacity—

Foley. What do you mean by audacity?

Dean. How dare you behave in this outrageous manner?

Foley. I will not stultify myself by arguing with you in you present state of excitement——

Dean. You disgraceful bohemian, if you don't clear out of this at once, I'll——

Foley. What, will you have the brutality to use physical violence?

Dean (*rushing at him*). I'll break every bone——

Foley (*flying*). Oh don't, don't—(*He flies out.* Dean *rushes after him as far as the door. There is then heard a noise outside as of a person falling down stairs, then a bang of the street-door.*)

Millicent (*excitedly*). There, you see the kind of people your policy has brought you among. I am insulted by one of your party.

Dean. My dear Millicent, I am so sorry you have been subjected to such annoyance.

Millicent. This comes of going against your class. The impudent fellow—how dare he?—and he was so complacent to my uncle just now.

Dean. Then Mr Hardman has come?

Millicent. Yes—and now I see the reason why this fellow wanted him out of the room, and kept assuring him of his good will.

Dean. What is that? Has he gone over to your uncle?

Millicent. He was pretending to, I suppose.

Dean. Then your uncle is against us?

Millicent. What else can he be, when he knows you will ruin yourself and this town? Here you are surounded by adventurers. I was sure Foley was an adventurer. I told you so.

Dean. Indeed I am astonished at his behaviour. My opinion of him is quite changed. I am sure none of my other colleagues——

Millicent. They are all the same. They are not of your class.

Dean. They are the leading men of our town.

Millicent. Never mind Jasper. This is a movement against the best class of your town's people whose interests are bound up with Anglebury. It was always believed that you would take the lead here in a manner approved of by your English friends.

Dean. No man approved of by Anglebury could ever take the lead in this town.

Millicent. That is a great mistake, Jasper. If the people are properly managed by local men of

position, they can easily be made instrumental for forwarding the convenience and interests of Anglebury. But you have taken it upon yourself to go against the traditions of your family. If you continue, we shall be ostracised by all our English friends.

Dean. I don't know why you should be so certain of that.

Millicent. My uncle says so. He says I shall be banished from all circles of political activity.

Dean. If your friends are so worthless as to turn against you because I act justly——

Millicent. Justly—you cannot think, Jasper, that you are acting justly?

Dean. Why not Milicent—?

Millicent. My uncle says you have not justice on your side; and I myself feel—I know you haven't.

Dean. That is only your opinion, my dear Millicent.

Millicent. We English cannot do injustice.

Dean. I wish you had never done any here.

Millicent. But Jasper don't you know that justice to Ireland is now the cry that is vitalising our party in England?

Dean. I know—a word to vitalise a party—a name that is shouted and then forgotten when it has served is turn——

Millicent. Jasper I will not argue with you. I have confidence in my uncle.

Dean. It would be better for you if you had confidence in me.

Millicent. I cannot Jasper.

Dean. (*with a sigh*). Yes—I suppose that is the way. The man of fame who influences thousands, cannot often command the confidence of his nearest and dearest. It was so with Marcus Aurelius. On the other hand the quite obscure man is often an oracle in his home.

Millicent. Jasper dear I always thought you were very clever. I now think you are only misled by some evil influence. Oh Jasper if you really loved me, you would not seek to destroy the interests of my life.

Dean. I want you to find all your interests here, Millicent.

Millicent. I could not bury myself in Ireland.

Dean. Why not, Millicent—? Could we not work together? And heaven knows there is much work to do. Our interests would be the same. I don't know how I could imagine greater happiness for us both.

Millicent. No Jasper, it would not be happiness. You see it so, because you are talking of what only interests yourself.

Dean. But I thought you loved this country. Do you not?

Millicent. Oh yes—of course—but you must understand that you cannot take me from my surroundings, from my pursuit of educational ideals,

from the aim of life in England which fascinated our generation of girl students. You cannot do all this without destroying my happiness.

Dean. And do you believe that I could find my happiness in the course *you* would have me follow, of placing England before Ireland?

Millicent. That is not it, Jasper. I want you to see that the best interest of Ireland is never to oppose in any way England. It is a fatal policy. Oh, Jasper, I entreat of you to abandon it.

Dean. Millicent, you do not know what you are asking. Even if I agreed with you, and were inclined to abandon my policy, I could not—without incurring suspicion and contempt.

Millicent. What does it all matter with these people here—people I am sure like this Foley for the most part? Is not anything better than to be ostracised by our friends in England? Dear Jasper, let us leave this place. Let us go to England. Let us amid the riches and prosperity of England forget altogether this poor mean place.

Dean. I love this poor mean place better than your England that has made it poor and mean. But it will not remain so. We are at last united, and we shall enforce payment of those riches we know are our due.

Millicent. Jasper, you do not love me. You would not talk like that if you loved me.

Dean. I love you, Millicent. You do not believe what you say.

Millicent. True love refuses nothing.

Dean. Nothing—except a betrayal of honour—

Millicent. No, not that—I would only awaken your consience before it is too late. That conscience will surely yet force you to abandon this false idea of honour.

Dean. I can not tell what may happen in the future; but now my conscience is at rest.

Millicent. You will see that there is no justice on your side. You will yet see that false honour was but a destroyer of true love.

Dean. My love is the same. It is your's that is failing, or you could not put me to this cruel test.

Millicent (*after a short pause*). Jasper, if that is so, we had better go our different ways.

Dean. What do you say? You are not serious, Millicent. You must not mind my words. I did not mean——

Millicent. I had better no longer be an obstacle to your ambition, Jasper.

Dean. Millicent—dear Millicent, you are not serious. You would never leave me.

Millicent. Will you abandon your policy for my sake, Jasper?

Dean (*with a struggle*). I—I cannot.

(George Hardman *enters*).

Dean (*starting*). Oh, Mr. Hardman—

Millicent. Uncle, I must no longer remain a guest in this house.

Hardman (*looking from one to the other*). Is that so, my dear? Come then, you had better stay with me at my hotel until to-morrow when we shall return to England.

(Millicent *and* Hardman *bow to* Jasper, *and exeunt.*)

Dean (*bewildered*). What is this? I cannot believe—what have I done? I have lost her. Oh, I have lost her.

Curtain.

ACT FOURTH.

(A sitting-room in the principal hotel of the Town.)

(George Hardman *anxious and restless walks to and fro.*)

(The Waiter *enters.*)

The Waiter. Alderman Daniel Lawrence wants to see you, sir.

Hardman. He has come at last. (*To* The Waiter.) Show him up.

(*Exit* The Waiter. Alderman Daniel Lawrence *enters.*)

Lawrence. My dear Mayor, I'm so glad to see you. How well you are looking. I never saw you looking better in my life.

Hardman. Thank you, Alderman Lawrence, thank you. I am very glad to see you. I hope you are well.

Lawrence. As well as can be expected in these anxious times, Mayor—

Hardman. Anxious times indeed they are. I wish especially to consult you about the unjustifiable agitation that is going on in this town. You are an able man, Alderman Lawrence—a man of the world and of affairs. You know your town well. How do you think this agitation will end?

Lawrence. I think it will succeed.

Hardman. You do ?

Lawrence. That is my opinion.

Hardman. You are a staunch friend of ours. What is your advice ?

Lawrence. I advise payment before the law is set in motion: otherwise you will have enormous costs to pay as well.

Hardman. Oh, this is impossible.

Lawrence. Why—?

Hardman. No member of our Corporation could propose such a thing without being municipally discredited for life.

Lawrence. Well, I don't see what else you can do.

Hardman. Really, Alderman Lawrence, one would think that you were holding a brief for the other side. Why, you say things that completely upset my policy.

Lawrence. Quite so—your preconceived policy, my dear Mayor—there is nothing English politicians dislike so much as being told what they do not want to hear. At the same time I feel I would only be misleading you, if I told you otherwise. All our townspeople are so united, that I see no escape for you.

Hardman. Well, they say of us Englishmen that we never know when we are beaten; and I for one don't mean to allow our townspeople to be mulcted of extra taxation without making a fight for it. You know this town well, Alderman Lawrence. Cannot you think of some device ?

LAWRENCE. I declare you give me a most difficult task.

HARDMAN. Just consider now. You are a man of great acumen. I always maintain that Anglebury has not appreciated your merits as it should have.

LAWRENCE. Well indeed I would not have mentioned the subject: but now that you have touched upon it, I will say to you as a friend, that Anglebury has done nothing to encourage me, considering the extremely unpopular part I play here from time to time in her interest.

HARDMAN. You know the post of solicitor to our Corporation is just vacant. The emoluments are very handsome.

LAWRENCE. I know, my dear Mayor. I know.

HARDMAN. The appointment will surely be given to the lawyer who does the best service to Anglebury.

LAWRENCE. Quite so—I have often thought what a pleasant thing it would be to have that appointment.

HARDMAN. Besides—remember there is a very handsome retiring pension.

LAWRENCE.. Yes—I have always considered a pension as the fine flower of an appointment.

HARDMAN. And still with such a prize before you, can you not find a means of winning it !

LAWRENCE. My dear Mayor, how you torture me !

Hardman. Come—come, Alderman Lawrence, there is no time to be lost.

Lawrence. Well really I am put to the pin of my collar. Well—have you seen the Corporation yet?

Hardman. Only a few of them, and then not in a business way—

Lawrence. Perhaps it might come to something, if you were to meet them in a body?

Hardman. Or perhaps one by one– just casually, you know. Who are the most likely to be influenced? What kind—for instance—is Foley, the editor?

Lawrence. A great mountibank with a popular reputation for asceticism—why do you ask?

Hardman. Oh nothing—only he protested great friendliness.

Lawrence. I don't think you would do any good by trying to tamper with the Corporation singly. You see popular excitement has risen to such a pitch that not one of them, even if he were inclined, would dare to take your advice. The only one I would suggest to be got at singly would be Jasper Dean. If he could be induced to abandon the movement, then, I am sure, there would be such a scramble among the rest for leadership that everything else would be forgotten.

Hardman. I am afraid it's no use with Jasper Dean.

Lawrence. You think so.

Hardman. I am afraid so.

Lawrence. Well in that case all I can suggest is that you meet the Corporation in a body, and try the efficacy of argument. You may not think much of this; but I really don't see any thing else to be done.

Hardman. Where can I meet them?

Lawrence. Why here—can you not invite them to meet you?

Hardman. Certainly—I should be very pleased.

Lawrence. You might put your views to them quietly and with tact.

Hardman. Yes—I am sure I could influence them, if they have any reason left.

Lawrence. I think it is worth trying. The Corporation is sitting at present. Suppose I were to go now and ask all the members to meet you here when their business is finished.

Hardman. Or do you think it would be better if I were to go and meet them? What do you think?

Lawrence. Oh, no, that would be too public and formal. The meeting ought to be friendly merely—convivial, you understand. You know all our Corporation: don't you, my dear Mayor?

Hardman. Well, I know some of them, Alderman Lawrence.

Lawrence. Do you know Cassidy—a pretentious fellow who is dying to be recognised as the head of the family?

HARDMAN. What family?

LAWRENCE. Well you may ask. But you musn't on any account appear ignorant of the importance its members attach to it. I mean Jasper Dean's family --a lot of very worthy people a hundred years behind their time, and with no sense of the movement of the world or the realities of things.

HARDMAN. No— I don't think I ever met Cassidy.

LAWRENCE. Do you know Kirwan—a bitter fellow? Take care of him.

HARDMAN. Why—?

LAWRENCE. I really believe he is honest. He's no use.

HARDMAN. Oh—yes I've met him.

LAWRENCE. And a scurrillous person called Murphy, who thinks everyone a fool but himself—

HARDMAN. Yes, yes, I've met him too. But he is very able: isn't he?

LAWRENCE. Unfortunately he is. Well, my dear Mayor, now that you know the foibles of these men, it might be useful to your purpose if you said something to each, that would flatter his vanity.

HARDMAN. I see—I see. Now you are beginning to suggest something. Does anything else occur to you ?

LAWRENCE. I fear you do not help me much in my suggestions. Well—let me see—if this conference should fail—

Hardman. Don't prophesy failure, Alderman Lawrence.

Lawrence. I do no wish to, I assure you. Still we ought to be prepared to meet every contingency: and I was thinking that if you do not succeed in persuading them to abandon the holding of this meeting, it might perhaps be possible to create a noisy opposition.

Hardman. You mean at the meeting?

Lawrence. Yes—it is a very dangerous proceeding, as there is such a huge majority against us. Still there are in this town reckless, determined fellows who for money would make a desperate attempt to break up the meeting.

Hardman. Do you think you could manage this?

Lawrence. I am sure I could, if you supply the means.

Hardman. Of course I will. What satisfaction it is to deal with a practical man like you, Alderman Lawrence, after the worry these mischievous theorists give me here.

Lawrence. Ah, my dear Mayor, I as a professional man cannot but become practical when I discern a prospect of leaving this meagre place for a sphere of emolument in so rich a garden as England.

(The Waiter *enters.*)

The Waiter. The Misses Dean, sir. (*Exit.*)

(*Enter* Miss Caroline *and* Miss Arabella Dean.)

Caroline. Mr. Hardman, how is your dear niece? How do you do, Alderman Lawrence?

Lawrence. How do you do, Miss Dean? How well you're looking. I never saw you looking better in my life.

Arabella. We haven't yet got over our surprise at the departure of Miss Fell.

Hardman. I shouldn't have thought there was anything to be surprised at under the circumstances.

Caroline. Is she very distressed, poor thing?

Arabella. Poor Jasper is dreadfully distressed.

Hardman. I never thought he would have brought this trouble upon her. However she struggles against her grief.

Caroline. I am very angry with Jasper.

Hardman. He might have been more generous to his affianced bride.

Lawrence. Yes, and to such a charming young woman into the bargain—

Caroline. I always respected your sound common sense, Alderman Lawrence. Can you not help us in this difficulty?

Lawrence. That is exactly what I am now trying to do, Miss Dean. I am going to bring the Corporation here for a conference with Mr. Hardman.

Caroline. That is the only useful move I have heard of in this agitation.

Lawrence. I have great hopes of its success. (*Exit.*)

Caroline. I can assure, Mr. Hardman, that this trouble you are suffering, is none of my doing.

Hardman. I know that perfectly well, Miss Dean.

Caroline. Goodness knows I have always tried to instil sound political principles into my nephew. It is not my fault if he has listened to other advice.

Hardman. We must not yet despair of saving him from his bad advisers.

(Millicent Fell *enters.*)

Caroline. My dear, how I feel for you!

Arabella. It must be very disappointing when something prevents one from settling one's self.

Hardman. I tell her that perhaps she would do better if she were to marry some steady man in England.

Millicent. Indeed it seems that Jasper doesn't care about raising my social and political station.

Caroline. As if the principal object in marriage was not to improve one's social position—

Arabella. Yes, Caroline, I hope you will do nothing yourself to belie what you say.

Caroline. Arabella, I wonder you can make so inappropriate a remark. It is as bad as your sympathy with Jasper.

Hardman. It is certainly odd that he should become an object of sympathy under the circumstances.

Arabella. Well, all I know is that he is dying to be reconciled to Miss Fell.

Hardman. Is he? Then what steps will he take towards a reconciliation?

(The Waiter *enters.*)

The Waiter. Alderman Dean.

Millicent. Oh, I will not—I cannot see him. (*Exit.*)

The Waiter. Am I to show him up, sir?

Hardman. Yes—stop a minute. I expect several gentlemen to see me here soon. When they come, bring some refreshments. (*Whispers to* The Waiter.) You understand. (*To* Miss Caroline *and* Arabella Dean.) And you will have tea also: won't you, ladies? Yes, bring tea also, waiter. (*Exit* The Waiter.) Now we shall see if Jasper means reconciliation.

(Alderman Jasper Dean *enters.*)

Dean. So you have invited the Corporation here to see you, Mr. Hardman. I was overjoyed when I heard Lawrence give your message. I couldn't even wait until our business was finished, to come here.

Hardman. Are the Corporation coming, also, Jasper?

Dean. Of course they are. They will finish directly. You have raised hopes in all of us.

Hardman. I have not yet lost hope, Jasper.

Caroline. You must know, Jasper, the sorrow your conduct has brought on Miss Fell.

Dean. Oh how is she? I am truly sorry. I haven't had a moment's rest since she left us.

Hardman. She is a proud girl and feels the humiliation?

Dean. What do you mean by humiliation? It was none of my doing. That's certain.

Hardman. Whose doing was it then, if not your's, Jasper?

Caroline. Alas! whose indeed—?

Dean. No one has a right to reproach me for doing my duty.

Hardman. We all have a right to feel grieved at your mistaking your duty.

Dean. How can you sincerely believe I have mistaken my duty?

Caroline. Is it the duty of a man with your family and position to join anti-English agitators?

Dean. Why not, if they are in the right—?

Arabella. To be sure, Jasper—the winning side is always in the right.

Hardman. You cannot really believe they are in the right? Before having committed yourself, you might have consulted the other side. You would then doubtless have realised that there was not such unqualified justice in your movement as you imagined.

Dean. I know all the arguments of your side, Mr. Hardman, and consider none of them sufficient.

Caroline. But taken together wouldn't they

be more than sufficient? I now say nothing of the disgrace to your family, and the loss of this charming girl who is so devoted to you, and to your best interests in life.

Dean. Ah, she is the only argument that might influence me, if it were possible I could change.

Hardman. If she were the only argument, I would not press you, Jasper. You would not be justified in abandoning your colleagues merely for the sake of private affection, however deep.

Caroline. What an elevated impartial mind—! Jasper, you should be led by Mr. Hardman.

Hardman. I don't wish to influence anyone in the least. I am merely anxious that you, Jasper, should listen to me, and then I know your sense of right and justice will lead you to take a correct view of the case.

(The Waiter *enters carrying a large tray on which are tea things, liquor, glasses, etc.*)

The Waiter. The gentlemen of the Corporation are below, sir.

Hardman. Very good—show them up.

(The Waiter *lays the tray on a table and exit.*)

Caroline. Dear me, here come, Belle Cassidy, and Sarah Leech too. I wonder what they want by coming?

Arabella. Don't you know that Belle must always watch James when he goes to an entertainment, for fear he might take too much intoxicating liquor.

Caroline. Oh—and of course Sarah knows that Belle, always abuses her behind her back. So she is afraid to leave her.

Dean (*irritated*). That is the way with the family!

(*Enter* Mrs. Cassidy, Mrs. Leech, Mayor Joseph Tench, Aldermen Daniel Lawrence, James Cassidy, Michael Leech, Ralf Kirwan, Thomas Murphy, Valentine Foley, *and various other Aldermen and Town Councillors, then the Town Clerk,* John Cloran, *and* Mrs. Costigan, *who peeps in at the door.*)

Lawrence. My dear Mr Hardman, I suppose it is superfluous for me to introduce our respected Mayor and Corporation.

Hardman. Indeed we are no strangers. Gentlemen, you are welcome. How is my courteous friend, Alderman Murphy? Ah, if we only had your wise head and strong will in *our* Corporation—! And here is our ascetic of the new journalism, Alderman Foley? How do you do, sir? Ah—Alderman Kirwan, you dislike us English. We don't deserve it. How do you do? (*Shakes hands with other members of the Corporation.*) How do you do? How do you do, Alderman Cassidy? How do you do, Alderman Leech? You both belong to the family: don't you? Ah, what a family—!

Lawrence. A family with so many wise heads that each is capable of taking the lead—

Cloran. That's right, sir. True for you, sir—

Hardman. Gentlemen, won't you have some refreshments? Here is your excellent wine of the country. Ha—ha—(*They help themselves now to liquor.* Mrs. Cassidy *prevents* Cassidy *from doing so.*) Ladies—the tea is waiting for you.

Foley. I will, if you please, take the beverage of the ladies.

Caroline. Sarah, I think you had better preside over the tea.

Mrs. Cassidy. Yes, Sarah is never so satisfactory as when she is given lots to do.

Mrs. Leech (*pouring out the tea*). Ah, it's well they see some good in me.

Foley. Woman never looks so charming as when presiding at the social tea-table.

Mrs. Leech. Alderman Foley, what do you mean? I declare you are getting quite complimentary. Are there any more for tea? (*Pours in the milk*). There, sugar yourselves, and I'll milk you all round.

Caroline. Sarah, you are talking too much.

Mrs. Cassidy. It never does to excite Sarah.

Lawrence. What a satisfaction it is for us all to meet together in this rational enjoyment of a social prosperity. I assure you ladies and gentlemen, the world was made for prosperity. And what a splendid world it is! How truly exhilirating to expand one's chest and breathe in the air of prosperity!

Murphy. Yes, and what a fine big tone it gives to the lungs!

Kirwan. And how impressively a commonplace thought comes from the sound-board of a fine pair of lungs !

Foley. In fact after brains the best things to have are fine sounding lungs.

Murphy. A great deal better than brains, as far as public pay goes—

Mrs. Costigan (*coming in*). The people don't want to give any pay. The people never like to pay anything. They think their representatives are not acting—

Cloran. Costigan, what are you doing here? Retire, woman.

Mrs. Costigan. *Mrs.* Costigan, if you please—Cloran.

(*She retires outside the door.*)

Hardman. Who is this person trying to create a disturbance?

Cloran. No one of consequence, sir—she only came into the hotel, thinking this was a public meeting.

Hardman. Well, gentlemen, I am sorry that by your remarks to my worthy friend, Alderman Lawrence, you appear to be wanting in that unanimity which renders public life durable and influential.

Kirwan. On the contrary, Mr Hardman, we are all unanimous, with the sole exception of Alderman Lawrence.

Hardman (*facetiously*). Why can you not agree with him and thus be wholly unanimous ?

Foley (*who has all along been making himself remarkable by his attentions to* Caroline). Come, this is not the place for arguing. Remember, gentlemen, we are in the presence of ladies.

Mrs. Leech. What does he mean ?

Caroline. It is the height of bad taste to argue with Mr Hardman and Alderman Lawrence. (*Murmurs.*)

Foley. It is disgraceful to make this noise at any remarks of a lady. I will not allow it. I beg to take this lady under my protection.

Murphy. What—are you losing your head, Foley?

Kirwan. Not in the least—he has his wits very much about him.

Foley. Madam—Miss Dean, allow me to escort you from among these unruly fellows. (*Cheers.*)

Hardman. Gentlemen, I beg of you——

Cloran. Ah, gentlemen, don't be excited.

Foley. I shall have something to say about this in the next number of the "Weekly Denouncer." (*Laughter. Exeunt* Foley *and* Miss Caroline Dean, *who leans on his arm. The other men again help themselves to liquor, and* Mrs. Cassidy *again prevents* Cassidy.)

Mrs. Leech. Isn't Caroline very queer?

Mrs. Cassidy. What does she mean by making a fool of herself in this way with Alderman Foley?

Arabella. Caroline has always had such sense.

Hardman. Dear me, this misunderstanding is most unfortunate. However, gentlemen, I dare say you know that literary people are always somewhat flighty, and not to be depended upon. Let us hope that this incident may have no further disturbing effect upon our unanimity, and social enjoyment.

Dean. It is a most strange incident, and puzzles me.

Kirwan. I hope it may not lead to disunion.

Hardman. Oh; think of it as a union that may lead to a union with Anglebury.

Tench. Such a union rests altogether with your Corporation, Mr Hardman. You have only to accept the report of your Commission of Arbitration.

Hardman. Oh, the Commission—it was not fairly constituted?

Dean. It was constitued by yourself, Mr. Hardman.

Hardman. Well—at all events it was not unanimous in its decision.

Dean. No, but a large majority agreed——

Hardman. I do no think majorities always infallible. One of the dissentients from this majority is a most able man with a great knowledge of the question.

Kirwan. I thought it was an article in your political creed, Mr Hardman, that the majority must always be right.

Hardman. So it is, my dear sir. But this is not exactly a case in point.

Kirwan. Of course—when England is attacked by a fever of justice, Ireland is never a case in point.

Hardman. Well gentlemen, if you are going to deride every word I say——

Dean. Oh we ought to hear courteously whatever Mr Hardman has to say, gentlemen.

Murphy. Come, come, that's very well. But what I want to know is why were we brought here at all? I was quite against coming.

Tench. We came because we would wish to settle amicably with Mr. Hardman.

Dean. And I am sure we are quite ready to hear any argument from him. We would give it our best consideration. But up to this he has brought forward no real argument. What can we do?

Hardman. You can listen to what I have to say now.

Dean. I am most anxious to. You can only expect to convert us by a valid argument.

Murphy. One would think, Alderman Dean, that you were anxious to be converted.

Dean. You misunderstand me, Alderman Murphy.

Murphy. Well, what does all this mean?

Dean. You surely must admit that if Mr. Hardman brought forward a valid argument, we should be bound in conscience either to refute it satisfactorily, or to act according to it.

Lawrence. Upon my word that is very fair, and quite what I should expect from Jasper Dean.

Hardman. It is the right spirit in which to meet me; and I am confident of your favourable judgment, gentlemen, when you hear what I now have to say. This is what I have to say, gentlemen. I think you are under a misconception as to the true point of dispute between us. I mean you all seem to have forgotten the large sums of money that Anglebury has repeatedly subscribed to your charities. Have we not also sent money to you for public works in times of distress? I should think that what we have given in those ways ought more than compensate for what may be owing to you.

Murphy. Not at all—not at all—you owe us a hundred times more than you ever gave us in charity.

Hardman. That is a matter for calculation, sir, and not for mere assertion.

Dean. I seem to have overlooked somehow this argument. I wonder is there any real force in it.

Kirwan. You are no expert, Dean. It is enough that a body of financial experts has decided the case.

Dean. I suppose so. If it were otherwise, and I were doubtful of our right to this money, I should never have rest.

Murphy. Look her, Alderman Dean, if this movement is ever broken up by any man, that man will be you.

Dean (*indignantly*). What right have you to say this, Alderman Murphy? (*Sensation.*)

Cassidy (*to* Leech). It's disgraceful that one of the family should be attacked by a creature like Murphy?

Leech. I don't think he would venture to attack you like that, James. Jasper I knew wasn't the man to lead.

Hardman. Every man must be morally responsible for his actions. I always admired Jasper Dean, because in addition to his great talents, I believed him to be thoroughly conscientious.

Kirwan. Well—well—if one isn't conscientious one's self, the next best thing is to praise another's conscientiousness.

Hardman. Not conscientious—what do you mean sir? We English are a conscientious people. Our public men are among the few public men in the world, who have a conscience.

Kirwan. No doubt they have; but it takes so much to awaken their conscience.

Murphy. Nothing short indeed than putting the Englishman with his face to the wall, and kicking him till he roars——

Mrs. Cassidy. I declare I never heard such language as this in all my life.

Cloran. Ah gentlemen don't—and think of the ladies, gentlemen.

Hardman (*blandly*). Oh do not hinder dis-

cussion. This is nothing beyond the limit of legitimate argument.

Murphy. I don't mean to give anyone offence. I merely wish to state that we have our knife now in the throat of Angebury, and that we intend to turn it round and round and draw a fine pailful of the blood she has sucked out of our town. (*Commotion.*)

Mrs. Cassidy. I declare Jasper, you should repudiate this. I am shocked.

Mrs. Leech. Belle is always shocked when there is a chance of prosperity to the town.

Arabella. Jasper, take care and keep on the winning side. Belle only talks like that because she thinks it fashionabe.

Dean. There is nothing to be gained by using strong language. I am perfectly certain that, if my conscience is not convinced in the justice of this movement, violence of language will not make it so.

Murphy. Conscience be ——— it isn't your conscience, man. It's the lady upstairs—

Dean (*furious*). Sir, how dare you?

Kirwan. Gentlemen, gentlemen, I beg of you—

Cloran. Ladies, ladies—think of the ladies, gentlemen.

Kirwan. Where is the use of this quarrelling? Where is the use of strong language to Mr. Hardman?

Hardman. Oh, pray do not mind me. I am not in the least offended.

Kirwan. I know. There it is. The English do not mind anything provided they gain their point. That is the secret of their success. We insult them. We make street demonstrations against them. We think we are enraging and annihilating them. But it doesn't harm them. They don't mind. There is only one thing they mind, and would at all hazards prevent. But we are prepared to do anything except that one all important thing whereby we could wring from England all we want.

Hardman. And pray what is that all important thing?

Kirwan. To unite.

Murphy. Why man, aren't we all united? Come, let us talk no more, but act.

(Mrs. Costigan *re-enters.*)

Cloran. Oh my, there's Costigan again. Stand outside, Costigan.

Lawrence. Why would you turn her out? Let her stay—this venerable type of the people!

Hardman. Of course—I always like to have the people with me.

Mrs. Costigan. Hoorray for Lawrence and Hardman who won't shut out the people—

Several Voices. The people for ever—the people for ever—

Cassidy. I am for giving the people practical advantages.

Leech. That's right, James. Sound common sense, James—

Cassidy (*to* Mrs. Costigan). Come, ma'am, let me give you some refreshment. (*He leads her to the liquor to which he helps her. He is then about to help himself, but is prevented by* Mrs. Cassidy.)

Lawrence. Gentlemen, gentlemen, I should like to make a settlement between you and Mr. Hardman. Do not be so exacting in your demands. Remember that politics, especially in this town, are subject to strange and sudden shiftings. Take my advice and come to terms when you can.

Murphy. There will be no shifting as long as we are united.

Lawrence. How long will you be so? Do you think you are really united?

Murphy. The citizens' meeting to-morrow will answer you that.

Tench. It will be the largest and most unanimous ever known in our town.

Kirwan. And my friend Alderman Dean will be in the chair.

Dean (*starts and looks scared*). What's that? What——

Mrs. Cassidy. I think—perhaps—a more experienced member of the family might be found——

Arabella. Hold your tongue, Belle Cassidy. Don't try to push your old husband before my Jasper.

Cloran. Ladies, ladies—ah don't ladies——

Mrs. Leech. Gracious, what has come over Arabella? She'll be turning dynamiter next.

Mrs. Costigan. (*having meanwhile repeatedly helped herself to the liquor*). Who's talking of dynamiters?

Cloran. Oh my—Costigan too——

Mrs. Costigan. Hic—I never approved of dynamite. I think the whole thing is immoral. Hic—still at the same time I think no Irishwoman should be discouraged——

Cloran. For shame, woman—out you go. Come along——

Mrs. Costigan. Hooray! I'm the voice of the people. Hooray—what—you Corporation—are you turning out the people? I'm a respectable woman——

(*She is hust'ed out by* Cloran, *who also exit.*)

Mrs. Cassidy. I'm sure after this its time we ladies took our departure. Come, James.

Murphy. I know I'm going off. I haven't any more time to waste here. (*Exit.*)

Lawrence. My dear colleagues of the Corporation, where are you going to? Where are you going to at all?

Hardman. Oh, gentlemen—listen to me. Your demands are outside the pale of practical politics.

Kirwan. That's the first English answer to every Irish demand.

Tench. I am afraid, Mr. Hardman, we cannot stay any longer.

Dean. Gentlemen do not go.

Kirwan. Not go, Dean—what is the meaning of this?

Dean. Don't you think we might settle with Mr. Hardman?

Tench. I don't think it is possible now to settle with Mr. Hardman.

Leech. James, you will have to take the lead after all.

Cassidy. I am prepared to take the lead. Gentlemen, permit me to lead you out of the room. (*Exit.*)

Leech. That's right, James. (*Exit after him.*)

Mrs. Cassidy. James has taken the lead.

Kirwan. I suppose somebody must walk first out of the room.

Hardman (*as the Corporation are bowing and departing*). Well gentlemen, I hope we part good friends, in spite of all differences of opinion. Good-bye, gentlemen, good-bye, ladies, good-bye.

Kirwan. Oh—we shall be such friends, Mr. Hardman, as the sheep can be with the shearer. (*Exeunt all except* George Hardman, Daniel Lawrence *and* Jasper Dean, *who lingers near the doorway.*)

Hardman (*exchanges glances with* Lawrence. *Then after a moment says.*) Jasper, you will stay and dine with us: won't you?

(Millicent Fell *appears at the door.*)

Millicent. Uncle, have they gone? (*Sees* Dean.) Oh—(*She is about to retire.*)

Dean (*vehemently*). Millicent, Millicent, don't go. Listen to me.

Millicent. What is it, Jasper?

Dean. I must speak to you. Come.

(*Exeunt* Jasper Dean *and* Millicent Fell.)

Lawrence. My dear Mayor what a charming girl your niece is! An English girl is certainly the most perfect type of womanhood in the world.

Hardman. Quite true Alderman Lawrence—but tell me, how do you think things are going?

Lawrence. I think Miss Fell a splendid young English woman. (*They sit down together in deep consultation.*)

Curtain.

ACT FIFTH.

(*Drawing-room in* Jasper Dean's *house.*

(The Maid *enters and ushers in* Mrs. Belle Cassidy *and* Mrs. Sarah Leech.)

The Maid. I will tell Miss Dean you are here, ladies. (*Exit.*)

Mrs. Leech. Now confess, Belle, you are just as curious as I am to know what Caroline is contemplating.

Mrs. Cassidy (*loftily*). I am coming to visit a relation. Is there anything extraordinary in that?

Mrs. Leech. Ah—you know best, Belle.

Mrs. Cassidy. Sarah, you are too inclined to build up stories upon no foundation.

Mrs. Leech. Well, if you think her extraordinary manner towards Alderman Foley yesterday no foundation——

Mrs. Cassidy. Stop, Sarah. Caroline is a woman of far too great common sense for any foolish tenderness.

Mrs. Leech. Oh indeed I know there is no tenderness in her. She only wants to get married. That's all.

Mrs. Cassidy. How dare you talk of Caroline in such a way? (*After a pause.*) I wonder will she really marry him, though. Here she comes.

(*Enter* Miss Caroline *and* Miss Arabella Dean.)

Arabella. Oh it is always a sign that something is brewing in the family, when Belle Cassidy and Sarah Leech appear.

Mrs. Leech. Caroline, what does she mean ?

Caroline. Her remarks as a rule admit of no rational explanation.

Mrs. Cassidy. Then you say, Caroline, that there is not likely to be a surprise for the family.

Caroline. Not that I am aware of——

Mrs. Cassidy. Are you quite sure? Now think—because you know I expect—hem—

Mrs. Leech. Belle, what are you beating about the bush in this way for ?

Mrs. Cassidy. Sarah, what do you mean ? You forget the respect I have for Caroline and the family. You seem destitute of respect for either of them.

Mrs. Leech. Ah—you are all down on me as usual.

Arabella. Sarah has spoiled the whole thing as usual.

Caroline. Belle, what affair of mine have you come to pry into ?

Mrs. Cassidy. I assure you, Caroline, you must not think such a thing for a moment.

Caroline. Well is it Jasper who excites your curiosity ?

Arabella. Poor fellow, he is making so brave a stand.

Caroline. I call it disgraceful of him.

Mrs. Cassidy. I am surprised, Caroline, that a woman of your sense should be upset by such a thing.

Caroline. You do not understand, Belle, the injury he will do us.

Mrs. Leech. But, Caroline, he is not the only one. James and Michael are also in the movement.

Mrs. Cassidy. Yes, I clearly see now it was James who ought to have taken the lead.

Caroline. Then, why on earth didn't he, Belle? I'm sure I wish he had. He had plenty of time to take the lead before ever Jasper joined the Corporation.

Mrs. Cassidy. He may have felt, perhaps, that the movement might not, as you seem to think, conduce to the credit of the family.

Caroline. Just so—then why has he gone in for it at all?

Mrs. Leech. But, Caroline, what do you mean? I thought you were regretting that he did not take the lead.

Caroline. Of course, I was. If the family must be disgraced by a member, I had rather it were some one else besides Jasper.

Mrs. Cassidy. Caroline, do you realise the enormity of what you are saying? It is then comparitively an insignificant matter to you that my husband James should disgrace the family.

Caroline. It is a less calamity than that Jasper

should go against his English friends. Even Alderman Foley now has begun to see Jasper's mistake.

Mrs. Cassidy. Yes—Alderman Foley always sees his own interests very clearly.

Mrs. Leech. Oh, so *you* have converted him, Caroline.

Caroline. He is a most estimable man.

Mrs. Leech. When is it to be, Caroline? You needn't hide it from us any more.

Caroline. I don't understand your insinuations.

Arabella. Sarah now will give out the report through the town.

Caroline. I am sorry to say Sarah does not always confine her reports to truth.

Mrs. Cassidy. Then do you pretend to deny the truth in this report Caroline?

Caroline. How dare you ask me such a question?

Mrs. Cassidy. How dare you speak of James as you did?

Caroline. It does not matter what I say about him. He never was up to much.

Mrs. Cassidy. He will very soon show you who is the real head of the family. (*Exit.*)

Mrs. Leech. Poor James will now be driven to do something. (*Exit.*)

Caroline. I suppose she is going to make him oppose Jasper at the meeting. I wish some one would take Jasper's place.

Arabella. It will take a better man to do it than James.

Caroline. I suppose the meeting has already commenced its business.

Arabella. Yes—it must have. Do let us go and hear Jasper.

Caroline. Hear Jasper—my nephew, my benighted nephew, whom I have striven to educate with a sense of our family respectability—hear Jasper trail that respectability in the dust—? Never—

(Alderman Ralf Kirwan *enters hurriedly*).

Kirwan. Oh—pardon me, Miss Dean. Good-day—where is your nephew ?

Caroline. Isn't he at the meeting?

Kirwan. No—where is he?

Arabella. Jasper not at the meeting—? he hasn't been here since morning.

Caroline. We haven't a notion where he is now.

Kirwan. Surely he knows that it is past the time. The meeting is impatient. I hurried across to bring him there.

Caroline. He is shirking the meeting.

Kirwan. Oh this is impossible.

Caroline. His reputation is saved.

Kirwan. You cannot be serious in what you are saying, Miss Dean.

Arabella. Jasper must have some reason for this.

Kirwan. He will ruin us. Who is there now fit to lead us at the meeting ?

Caroline. You—Alderman Kirwan—

Kirwan. I—Miss Dean—?

Caroline. Yes you—why not—?

Kirwan. Oh—for several reasons—

Caroline. A man of your ability and character is just fitted for taking the chair. I wonder why you always keep yourself in the background.

Kirwan. If I were to attempt any action it would at once excite several jealousies. There's Alderman Murphy. Then there's your cousin, Alderman Cassidy.

Caroline. Oh—James counts for nothing in a crisis like this. Alderman Murphy will not dare to create difficulties.

Kirwan. I am not so sure about that.

Caroline. I tell you, you are the man, Alderman Kirwan. Do not miss the opportunity of your life. Just run across to the meeting. Explain matters. Rally the people; and no one will dare to oppose you.

Kirwan. I am no leader, but I would risk anything to benefit our town.

Caroline. Of course you would. What—don't they all know you are such a clever man ?

Kirwan. I hope at least I am an honest one.

Caroline. Yes, and you have never taken that action in public affairs which was expected of you.

KIRWAN. Well—since your nephew has failed—

CAROLINE. Yes,—go and take his place.

ARABELLA. No one can take my Jasper's place. You will be on the losing side, Alderman Kirwan.

CAROLINE. Arabella, hold your tongue.

KIRWAN. I fear it is a hopeless task for me. I think I had better not attempt it.

CAROLINE. Ah—that is how people throw away their opportunities in life.

KIRWAN. Oh—if I could save our town from this disaster—

CAROLINE. What I advise is always the best.

KIRWAN. I will consider the matter.

CAROLINE. There is no time to consider. Go, do it at once.

ARABELLA. Perhaps you will find Jasper at the meeting, when you return there.

KIRWAN. Perhaps I may. I will go anyhow and do my best. There is no time to be lost. (*Exit.*)

CAROLINE. We are saved. We are saved.

ARABELLA. But if he succeeds in leading after all, and Hardman is defeated —

CAROLINE. Oh what do I care so long as it is not Jasper who defeats him, and we are safe with our English acquaintances.

(THE MAID *enters followed by* ALDERMAN VALENTINE FOLEY. *Exit* THE MAID.)

FOLEY. Isn't your nephew here, Miss Dean?

CAROLINE. No—where is he?

Foley. Ah—I see he dosen't intend to go to the meeting. The meeting will be a failure.

Caroline. So much the better—

Foley. Yes—so much the better—

Caroline. Then you are really and truly converted, Alderman Foley.

Foley. Madam, I am beginning to discern the charms of a refined and domestic private life.

Arabella. You won't be allowed much money for yourself, Alderman Foley.

Caroline. Arabella, you are a spiteful thing.

(Alderman Jasper Dean *enters.*)

Arabella. Oh Jasper is that you?

Caroline. Where have you been?

Dean. In my room——

Caroline. We thought you had gone out.

Dean. No, I have not been out to-day.

Arabella. Do you know, Jasper, that they are waiting for you at the meeting?

Dean. Are they?

Caroline. It is much too late to go now.

Dean. I never intended going.

Caroline. Jasper, I see you have been hiding from them.

Dean. Nothing of the sort—what makes you say that?

Caroline. Then why didn't you come down and tell Alderman Kirwan that you weren't going?

Dean. I did not wish to have an argument with him. You know I have had serious doubts as to the justice of our agitation.

Foley. Quite so—I perfectly understand.

Dean. Yes—I don't feel justified in going on any further with it.

Caroline. Well—for the sake of yourself and us all it's fortunate that your courage failed you.

Dean. That is not true. I have followed my conscience in the matter.

Arabella. Yes, he has clearly done so. He told me he had serious doubts about his position, Caroline, after his interview at the hotel with Mr Hardman.

Dean. Of course, Aunt Arabella—you remember I told you how Mr. Hardman's figures and arguments influenced me. That money, you know, given by Anglebury towards public works in this town—

Caroline. I don't believe it. Your courage failed you. That was all. You didn't care about disgracing your family or alienating our respectable friends from us. It was only your want of courage detained you.

Foley. Anyhow, madam, *you* have a splendid courage.

Caroline. I am the only one of the family who has shown any through this miserable affair. (*A sound of tumult is heard outside in the street.*) Oh mercy, what is that ?

Foley (*rushes to the window*). Hallo, there's Kirwan among a furious mob.

Caroline. Police, police, police—

Foley. He's laying about him with a stick.

Caroline. Police, police, police—

Arabella (*going towards the door*). I must run down and let him in——

Caroline (*getting before her*). What are you doing, you lunatic? Do you want to draw the fury of the mob on the house?

Foley. Madam, he will be murdered.

Caroline. Do you want me to be murdered? I am terrified. (*She screams with fright and attended by* Foley, *sinks into a chair.*)

Dean. Here, I will go and let him in.

Caroline. Don't allow him, Foley. Don't allow him, Foley. (*She screams.*)

Arabella. The mob will attack you, Jasper. They can't bear anyone on the losing side.

Dean. Yes—I have lost everything now—everything—except Millicent.

Arabella (*looking out of the window*). The police are coming.

Caroline. Police, police, police—

Dean. I have nowhere to go now but to Millicent. (*Exit.*)

Arabella. The police have dispersed the mob. Jasper is safe.

CAROLINE (*recovering*). I knew he hadn't courage, or he would have gone sooner.

FOLEY (*to* CAROLINE). Upon my honour and conscience, madam, I never saw anyone behave with such magnificent courage as you.

(ALDERMAN RALF KIRWAN *hurriedly reenters carrying a great stick.*)

KIRWAN. Hah, I think I have cracked a few skulls. I met your nephew rushing out of the house just now. Where was he?

ARABELLA. Here all the time—

KIRWAN. Oh, dear—he opened the hall door for me and then hurried away towards the hotel. Well—I certainly have been a fool for my trouble.

FOLEY. Why, what have you done?

KIRWAN. I—fancy I of all others to have been persuaded by a woman's advice into this—well it serves me right.

ARABELLA. I told you, you'd be on the losing side. Pity you didn't take the right woman's advice, Alderman Kirwan.

FOLEY. Tell us what happened to you.

KIRWAN. Oh, dear, I have scarcely any breath left. Well, foolishly following Miss Caroline's advice against my own better judgment, I will admit, I went to try and unite those various sections at the meeting, in place of Jasper Dean who failed—

ARABELLA. Why do you say he failed? He will return again and take the lead in his town.

Kirwan. Lead again?—never—he has lost his opportunity. It will never come to him again. He was the man for the movement. He might have been famous. A new movement will call forth a new man.

Foley. Tell us what happened at the meeting. (*Distant tumult is heard outside, which grows louder and louder during the following.*)

Kirwan. When I addressed the meeting, and said that Dean couldn't be found, there was a yell of disappointment and rage as horrible as if it came out of hell. I tried to appease the excitement. I exhorted all parties still to keep united. I said I would lead them to victory. No sooner had I spoken of leading than Murphy started up, and denounced me in the most outrageous language. He even accused me of having prevented Dean from coming to the meeting, so that I might usurp his position as leader. Just think that I should be accused of such a thing—I who never wanted to lead at all, except to save the situation. Thereupon his party in the hall raised fresh uproar, and gave him such courage that he actually sat in the chair and declared *himself* leader of the whole town. This was the signal for a free fight. His party were soon beaten and driven out by the majority. In the storming of the platform he himself would have been torn to pieces but for the arrival of the police. When I left, they had nearly cleared the hall. Then it was, as the last of the people were being cleared out, that I saw Alderman Cassidy sit in the chair and declare himself leader. (*They all laugh.*)

Caroline. That is just like James Cassidy.

Foley. After the storms of public life, how grateful to look down on the peaceful vista of domesticity—!

(*Furious tumult now outside, and sounds of glass breaking—stones are flung in through the windowpanes from the street.*)

Kirwan (*looking out of the window*). There are the Corporation running before the mob.

Caroline. Mercy—we shall be murdered. Where are the police? (*There is a loud knocking at the street door.*) Oh—they are breaking into the house.

Foley. Madam, while I am at your side, you need not fear the incursion of a million!

Caroline. Police, police, police—(*She faints and is supported by* Foley.)

Foley (*to the others who volunteer assistance*). Stand off, if you please. This lady belongs to me. (*He places her in an armchair and attends to her.*)

Kirwan. The mob have chased the Corporation up the street.

Arabella. Who are those coming in here?

(*Enter* Alderman Thomas Murphy *torn and bleeding,* Aldermen James Cassidy, *and* Michael Leech.)

Murphy. Whew—safe at last—well—anyhow it's a consolation that if I couldn't be leader myself, I have successfully prevented anybody else from being so.

Cassidy. You did not prevent me.

Murphy. You—?

Arabella. Oh won't you let me bring you some refreshment, Aderman Murphy? You are in a dreadful plight. (*Exit.*)

Leech. James was in the chair; and we passed a vote of censure on the whole proceedings.

Kirwan. Yes—Cassidy and the family are strong when it is a question of censuring anybody.

(Miss Arabella Dean *re-enters followed by* The Maid *who carries a tray with liquor, glasses etc. which she sets on a table and exit.*)

Arabella. Take a glass of something, Alderman Murphy.

Cassidy (*mixing for himself a stiff glass and drinking*). It's well there was at least one of the family to take the necessary step. (*He drinks deeply, and fills another glass.*)

Murphy. Confound Jasper Dean—if he only had the pluck to stick to his guns, I shouldn't be in this state. But I knew he was no good after yesterday. Oo—I'm sore. An organised band of the greatest blackguards in the town bludgeoned the meeting when the parties were all at loggerheads. I don't know who was leading those ruffians, but I believe they were sent there by Lawrence, although he didn't dare to appear himself.

(*Cheers are heard outside, then the voice of* Lawrence *addressing the crowd.*)

Kirwan. Faith, he dares to appear now at all events. Oh that big intolerable optimistic voice—!

(*A loud knocking is heard at the street door.* Caroline *is roused and screams.*)

Murphy. Ugh—we're going to have him in here too.

Cassidy (*who has all along been helping himself to the liquor*). Hic—a remarkably level-headed fellow Lawrence—hic—especially when his own interests are concerned—hic—

Leech. Come over here James and sit down. I am afraid you are not very well, James. (*He puts him into an arm chair.*)

(Alderman Daniel Lawrence *enters.*)

Lawrence. Ah—I thought Mr Hardman was here. But he will come directly. How do you do ladies? What, Alderman Murphy here—? I am glad to see you, Alderman Murphy. How well you are looking. I never——

Murphy. I won't be long well, if I keep looking at you, Daniel Lawrence, you brute. (*Exit.*)

Arabella. Oh call him back. He will be murdered in the street.

Lawrence. There is no danger of that, my dear Miss Dean. The police have now arrived in force to protect the leaders of the people.

(*Enter* Mrs. Belle Cassidy *and* Mrs. Sarah Leech.)

Mrs. Cassidy (*excitedly*). Where is my husband? Where is my husband?

Mrs. Leech. Where are our husbands?

Mrs. Cassidy. We were unable to get into the

meeting. (*Perceives* Cassidy.) James, James, what has come over you? James, you brute—

Leech. Rouse yourself James. The eyes of the family are upon you.

Cassidy (*huskily*). Go away. Go away.

Mrs. Cassidy. You are all murdering my husband. You have done this, Caroline Dean, out of jealousy because he took the lead.

Caroline. Belle Cassidy how dare you say I am the cause of your husband's intemperance? You don't expect me to watch him when you are away.

Mrs. Leech. Indeed Belle I told you it was a great risk letting him out of your sight to-day. Consider all the excitement——

Lawrence. Oh ladies his condition is pardonable, when so many had to fly before the people. (*More cheers outside.*) Ah! there is Mr Hardman.

Kirwan. I would like to know how you and he have become so suddenly popular?

Lawrence. I said I had arranged with him to have a tramway constructed from our market square to that poor and congested suburb which has always been a source of difficulty to the political economists of our town.

(*Enter* George Hardman, Miss Millicent Fell, Alderman Jasper Dean, *and* Mrs. Costigan *who waves her sweeping brush with the Union Jack tied like a flag to its handle.*)

Mrs. Costigan. Hooray for the wedding—three

cheers for Lawrence and Hardman the friends of the people—

Kirwan. So the people like an ass in a field, has allowed itself to be caught by a handful of oats.

Hardman. No man who speaks like that, can love his town.

Kirwan. Not love my town—? I am the only one who loves her. I have done my poor best for her —yes—I alone among you all—and the only thanks I get is to have it believed I do not love her.

Mrs. Costigan. You have insulted her people, you ruffian Ralf Kirwan.

Kirwan. Of course—if we don't always be-slaver them with flattery, we are insulting the people.

Hardman. I must say there is something divine about the judgment of the people.

Mrs. Costigan. Thank you, Mr. Hardman—because you said that, the people will follow you.

Kirwan. What divine judgment—!

Lawrence. Tut-tut, that useful elderly woman is an incarnation of the voice and majesty of the people.

Mrs. Costigan. Hooray!—we'll cheer any show, no matter what it is. And now we'er going to have the wedding of Jasper Dean. There's nothing like a wedding after all.

Hardman. Yes, my brilliant friend Jasper has followed the dictates of his conscience and refused to join the immoral conspiracy against Anglebury.

Lawrence. A nefarious conspiracy that could have only ended, as it has, in deserved confusion—

Kirwan. Of course it is now a conspiracy, because it has failed.

Caroline. And you have done all this Mr. Hardman!

Hardman. Gentler influences were at work, my dear Miss Dean. True love instinctively guarded Jasper's best interests. That is the advantage of marrying an English girl. The greatness of England is founded on marriages of true love!

Millicent. Jasper dear, you are now a free man. We shall have abundant opportunities, after we are married, for congenial political activities.

Dean. Dear Millicent, you always had a sympathetic way of putting things.

Caroline. He will now be able to remain respectable while he takes the lead.

Kirwan. As if leaders are ever respectable—

Arabella. At all events he can be on the winning side.

Lawrence. Peace peace—it is time to merge everything into the harmony which hymen has brought into our midst. Gentle influences have made more than one of us the wiser. If I mistake not, my respected colleague, Alderman Foley——

Foley (*leading* Caroline *forward*). Your surmise is correct. This lady has consented to be my wife.

Kirwan. Hallo—what about your mission, Foley?

Foley. I am not going to stultify myself by—

Lawrence. The highest mission of any man is to look after his private interests.

Kirwan. Anyhow this marriage can't possibly lessen his reputation for austerity.

Caroline. Alderman Kirwan, how dare you insult me?

Dean. Aunt Caroline, are you mad? Such a marriage——

Millicent. Miss Dean I beg of you to pause before you make yourself and all of us ridiculous. I could tell you——

(Foley *looks terrified.*)

Caroline. I will listen to no one. Do you think you are the only pair who have a right to marry?

Mrs. Costigan. Certainly ma'am—the more weddings the better for the people——

(Foley *triumphantly leads* Caroline *aside.*)

Mrs. Leech. Ha—wasn't I right about Caroline?

Arabella. Yes the family always knew that Caroline had great common sense.

Kirwan. Her's is the poetry of common sense!

Lawrence. Bless her—may she be happy ! May happiness result to all from the harmony and prosperity that has supervened in our midst. I declare, when I see this charming young lady who is shortly to be the bride of my friend Jasper Dean, and when I think how much I—how much others with prospective appointments owe to her, I can scarcely suppress my enthusiasm. She is worthy of a statue in our town. I would subscribe a pound to it; for no woman has done such sound political service to her fellow citizens since Joan of Arc——

Hardman. Oh! come Alderman Lawrence, much as I admire and appreciate my neice, I think you are inclined to view her in the too dazzling sunshine of your prosperity.

Lawrence. Prosperity—ah what a wonder worker it is to be sure! We can bear much public calamity so long as our individual appointments are safe. Let a man but draw his salary and look after himself and his family, and, believe me, public affairs can very well look after themselves. This is the best for the public, and, you see, it tends to make the public man himself more popular. And now that I think of it, my dear Mayor, you should really have a residence in this town. If the Mayor of Anglebury were to live here ocassionally, and to mix and converse with our townspeople, they would be so flattered by his presence among them, that they would cease to molest him by their grievances.

Kirwan. Never—we want no ruler's residence. We only want justice.

LAWRENCE. Tut-tut—we are far too popular now to consider such trifles. Come, my dear Mayor, come, let us stand at the open window and enjoy our popularity.

MRS. COSTIGAN. Let the people see their benefactors. Hooray—

LAWRENCE (*throws open the window, and is greeted with loud cheers from outside*). Come, my dear Mayor. (HARDMAN *joins him at the window. The cheers now increase. The English national anthem is heard on a band outside.* HARDMAN *and* LAWRENCE *grasp each others hands and bow their thanks. The ladies wave their handkerchiefs.* MRS. COSTIGAN *cheers and waves her Union Jack. All, except* KIRWAN, *are intent upon what is going on in the street.*)

KIRWAN (*comes to the footlights*). For us this is always The Tale of a Town.

Curtain.

THE END.

AN ENCHANTED SEA

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

Guy Font, *fifteen years old, the owner of Fonthill.*

Mrs. Rachael Font, *his aunt and guardian.*

Agnes Font, *her daughter.*

Lord Mask, *a young Irish Peer highly educated and speculative, very intimate with the Fonts.*

Commander Lyle, R.N., *of H.M.S. the gunboat "Seamew."*

Horace Yelverton, *tutor to Guy Font.*

A District Inspector *of the Royal Irish Constabulary.*

Two Peasants.

The action passes during the Autumn of 1882 *in the demesne of Fonthill on a western bay of Ireland.*

AN ENCHANTED SEA.

PLAY IN FOUR ACTS.

ACT FIRST.

(*A sea-shore with spaces of sand between rocks overgrown by sea-weed. On the left are high rocks which hide a cove where there is a landing place. At the back there is a broad bay with low hills on either side, and an opening which gradually widens out to the Atlantic Ocean beyond.*)

(HORACE YELVERTON, *a scholarly looking man, of middle age, dressed very plainly, and somewhat prim in his manner, is sauntering about, picking up a shell now and then to examine it.*)

(AGNES FONT *enters from the right. She is a fair-haired, graceful girl of about two and twenty, with delicate features, and is simplybut elegantly dresssd for walking in the country.*)

AGNES. Are you looking for more stone implements, Mr. Yelverton ?

YELVERTON. No, Miss Font, I would not find any here. I was only noticing a few shells lying about.

AGNES. Do you collect those too ? You are an indefatigable collector.

YELVERTON. I prize all ancient things of our ancient country. How interesting she is ! What legends cling to her ! I was talking a while ago to an old fisherman who told me such curious stories. Would you believe it, this district is full of folk-lore ?

AGNES (*laughing*). You mean stories of the fairies ?

YELVERTON. Yes—and I can tell you that our learned men are now beginning to study deeply Irish folk-lore. I shall have quite a budget of information for them when I go to Dublin again.

AGNES. Just fancy—and we have always been taught to consider such things nonsense !

YELVERTON. Your mother does not consider them nonsense, Miss Font.

AGNES (*uneasily*). My mother—no—in spite of her strong mind too—it is strange ; but they seem to influence her.

YELVERTON. Oh ! depend upon it, deep meaning and philosophy are at the bottom of folk-lore. Then do you mind your clever young neighbour, Lord Mask ? Although he has been educated away in England, he has become enchanted with the lore of ancient Ireland.

AGNES. It is all the influence of Guy. Do you believe that Guy has those strange powers Mask talks of ?

Yelverton. Guy has extraordinary powers for a boy only fifteen years old.

Agnes. I think he should be prevented from filling his mind with nonsensical tales.

Yelverton. Indeed they are sadly interfering with his education. He will learn nothing from me. His school is with those old world personifications of nature's forces.

Agnes. And the worst of it is they are not mere learned fancies or theories with him.

Yelverton. No, they are part of his nature. I suppose they result from his having been reared among the peasantry.

Agnes. But the peasants are not like him.

Yelverton. Ah! they are more imaginative than you think, Miss Font, though perhaps there are very few who have your cousin's intensity of imagination.

Agnes. I fear he will never shake off the influence of these mischievous tales.

Yelverton (*after a moment's reflection*). Talking of tales, Miss Font, my old fisherman to-day told me something that seemed odd and inexplicable.

Agnes. What was it?

Yelverton. He said that our neighbour would be the last Lord Mask, because the sea fairie was lately seen at Mask Castle.

Agnes (*frightened*). What is that? Don't mind him. You mustn't listen to such stories, Mr Yelverton.

Yelverton. Do you know what he meant, Miss Font ?

Agnes. Didn't he tell you ?

Yelverton. No—I could get no satisfactory explanation from him.

Agnes. I thought everyone knew. Oh, there is nothing to tell you.

Yelverton. Then why do you seem so frightened ?

Agnes. I am not frightened. Oh, it is really rather a pretty story. It is simply this. Long ago, they say, one of the first Lord Masks married a sea fairie. He brought her to Mask Castle, where she lived in an upper room of a tower. But she never could rest there, because it was not by the sea. So she was always coming down here to Fonthill and haunting the coast.

Yelverton. But that is just like the present Lord Mask.

Agnes. Don't say such a thing, Mr Yelverton.

Yelverton. Why—?

Agnes. He is believed to be descended from her.

Yelverton. Ah! that accounts for his strange love of the sea. But why should they say he will be the last Lord Mask ?

Agnes (*hesitatingly*). Because—well, because the tradition is that this sea fairie went back to the sea, and was never heard of again. (*She turns to the left.*)

Yelverton. Oh—they think she has now reappeared to—

Agnes. What steamer is that just come round the point ?

Yelverton (*looking to the left*). Why—yes to be sure—yes, she is the gunboat "Seamew," of course. She has stopped too. See ! One of her boats has left her for the shore. They are rowing straight towards us. Yes, and there is Commander Lyle coming in the boat.

Agnes. You can wait, Mr. Yelverton, and meet him. I must go up to the house.

(*Exit at the right.*)

Yelverton (*goes to the end of rocks at left and awaits approach of boat, while he makes signs of greeting*). Ah—how are you, Commander Lyle? Don't land there. It is very slippery. Bring the boat in this way. There—that's it.

(Commander Lyle—*a powerfully built man of seven or eight and twenty wearing the undress uniform of a Commander in the Royal Navy—enters from the left.*)

Lyle. Was that Miss Font who just left you?

Yelverton. Yes, Commander Lyle—she has gone up to the house.

Lyle. Humph—why should she hurry away like that?

Yelverton. I don't know. She did seem in a hurry now you mention it.

Lyle. Has Lord Mask been here lately?

Yelverton. Oh, he is nearly always here.

Lyle (*with a look of annoyance*). She doesn't hurry away from him, eh?

Yelverton. She does not indeed. They are, you see, old friends, as it were—playmates since childhood, he and she. Besides there appears to have been a family friendship for centuries between the Masks and Fonts.

Lyle. And marriages too, I have no doubt—

Yelverton. Well, no—it seems not. If they were relations as well as neighbours, their friendship might scarcely have been so lasting. Not that Mrs. Font wouldn't wish Lord Mask to marry her daughter—the old lady would wish it above all things. He is the only one I think she loves in the world.

Lyle. Yes—because he is a lord—

Yelverton. Perhaps—perhaps too because he is not a bit afraid of her. Many are you know. There is something terrible about her, don't you think? Oh, personally I cannot complain of her. She is always most polite and considerate to me. She generally is to strangers. But to her family, or to those who cross her—well, I shouldn't like to cross her in any way.

Lyle. Shouldn't you? That is just what I am going to do now.

Yelverton. Indeed——

Lyle. Yes—at least to expostulate with her and try if I can make her merciful to those paupers whom she is evicting.

Yelverton. Are you going to the islands now on eviction duty?

Lyle. Yes, I am taking the sheriff there. I have him on board the Seamew, and am ordered to protect him.

Yelverton. I wonder she makes herself so unpopular in these dangerous times. Since the Phœnix Park murders some four months ago murderers seem to do their work with impunity. As you know, several murders recently committed in this district, are still undetected.

Lyle. So I have heard. There is even a report that hired assassins are prowling about here to kill Mrs. Font. Still they don't seem to intimidate her. Why is she so particular about defending her nephew's property. Doesn't she rather dislike him?

Yelverton. Yes—but she worships the property. Ever since her husband's death when Guy became owner, she acts as his most careful guardian—at all events in respect of the property.

Lyle. Didn't she once make her husband deprive Guy's father of an estate?

Yelverton. Oh that was a very cruel act. The death of her only son, and now the son of the injured man owning the whole estate seem like a judgment upon her. And I believe her husband and his brother were the best of friends until she interfered.

Lyle. Who was she?

Yelverton. I hear she was a peasant girl of great beauty. Her father was one of those peasant money-lenders called *gombeen-men*—a very rich, shrewd, old fellow, they say.

Lyle. An old ruffian, I expect—no wonder there are stories told about her. Don't they say she tampered with a will or something?

Yelverton. There never was any proof. The dispute turned upon the existence of a will. Guy's father to his dying day accused her of having destroyed it. But, poor man, his mind seems to have been unhinged by his troubles. Then the death of his wife completely broke him. After lingering a while supported by the charity of his former tenants, he died leaving his only child Guy to their care.

Lyle. Was Guy very long with the peasants?

Yelverton. His whole life till a couple of years ago when Mrs. Font's son died—then her husband seems to have been struck with remorse for such ill-treatment of his brother. He immediately took charge of Guy who was now his heir, and sent him to school. But the boy's nature was too wayward to be controlled by the discipline of a school; so he had to be taken home again; and I was engaged as his tutor.

Lyle. He doesn't give me the idea of an insubordinate boy, somehow.

Yelverton. No, not exactly—but he manages to impose his will on people for all that. I think Lord Mask is held by this peculiar power of his.

Lyle. In what way does he use his power?

Yelverton. By a sort of second sight—his power is very curious. Persons of the same tempera-

ment as his—like Lord Mask for intsance—are very much influenced by it.

Lyle. I think Lord Mask a selfish sort of fellow. Don't you?

Yelverton. He is a man with a theory of life. That's all. Why, here he comes.

(Lord Mask *enters from the right. He is between twenty-three and twenty-four years of age, and of middle height. He has a somewhat impatient reckless expression and a certain uneasiness of manner which are nevertheless accompanied by a general air of seriousness and preoccupation. He wears a dark blue yachting cap and rather old black clothes that fit him rigidly in military fashion.*)

Mask. Good afternoon, gentlemen—has Guy been here?

Yelverton. I have not seen him.

Mask. Then I am not late.

Lyle. Come on board, Lord Mask, and I'll take you to the islands.

Mask. I cannot to-day. Thank you——

Yelverton (*to* Lord Mask). What are you doing at the sea again? You scarcely ever leave it of late.

Mask. Oh! I cannot live down there at Mask. It is too inland. (*Walks apart. Then suddenly turns.*) I wish I could live in your way, Commander Lyle.

Lyle. I fancy you wouldn't if you knew it. The navy is a hard life.

Mask. But there is a genius in it.

Lyle. Is there? Up to this I can't say I have met him.

Mask. There is Nelson.

Lyle. Oh Nelson—that is ancient history.

Mask. It can never be so. Genius is always young and fresh. There is nothing interesting in this world except genius. It lives through the ages; and the world must hear of it, although it may not know the world.

Yelverton. Is that what you meant when I once heard you say it was best to know few, but to be famous to all?

Mask. That is it. Just think of Nelson so simple with his friends on board ship, while the whole world rings with his fame! In the Painted Hall at Greenwich I have looked at those things he wore or used, till the genius of the dead made time stand still, as in a timeless palace of the sea!

Yelverton. Well, Lord Mask, I suppose you must always worship someone in this fashion.

Mask. Yes, it is so interesting to worship: isn't it?

Lyle. And a bit ridiculous too, perhaps—

Mask. To be worshipped—perhaps, but to worship—oh no—

Yelverton (*joking*). Would you then exempt Guy from this suspicion of being ridiculous?

Mask. Oh, yes—he is not like us. I always

say, you know, he is two thousand years old. Is he not a genius of the sea?

Yelverton. If peasant folk lore could make him so—

Lyle (*laughing*). You mean old women's tales.

Yelverton. You are a North of Ireland utilitarian, Commander Lyle, and cannot understand that what you call old women's tales are the source of all literature.

(Mrs. Rachel Font *enters from the right. She looks as if she once might have been very handsome, but is now an elderly woman of uncertain age, tall, rather gaunt, with sallow complexion, hair almost white, and an appearance of mental determination and fierceness beneath an expression of stolid calm. She is dressed in black, wears an outdoor mantle, and a black old fashioned cap bordered with a white frill, and carries a strong black umberella which she uses as a walking stick.*)

Mrs. Font. My dear Mask, why didn't you come up and see me at the house? This is the third day you haven't come near me.

Mask. I have been out of sorts.

Mrs. Font (*anxiously*). What was the matter? You have not been unwell: have you? I hope you are better.

Mask. The things you do turn me sick.

Mrs. Font. What have I done now, my dear?

Mask. I saw a poor calf being slowly bled to

death by your orders. I shot it dead with my revolver on the spot.

Mrs. Font. I know you did, you wayward boy.

Mask. You have no pity for suffering.

Mrs. Font. Why do you say that? Because I wanted to have some nice white veal for my boy—

Mask. Ugh, that I should be the cause—but did you ever put yourself in the position of those you make suffer?

Mrs. Font. Why should I try to suffer?

Mask. But pity—

Mrs. Font. Pity is only for those we love.

Lyle. I landed here, Mrs. Font, in hopes that I might induce you to have pity.

Mrs. Font. Eh—what is that, Commander Lyle?

Lyle. I am ordered to protect the sheriff while he is employed at your business on the islands.

Mrs. Font. Very well, Commander Lyle, do as you are ordered.

Lyle. I thought, perhaps, Mrs. Font, if I now saw you on the way there, that I might induce you to spare—

Mrs. Font. Do your duty, sir, and don't meddle with my affairs.

Mask. The times are very disturbed. The police say there are men watching to kill you, Mrs. Font. Don't you think you had better be cautious what you do?

MRS FONT. I will defend the estate against all the murderers.

MASK. There seems to be impunity now for murderers.

MRS. FONT (*as if making a discovery*). Impunity, do you say? Do you think a person may now commit a murder with impunity?

MASK. Yes, it would seem so.

LYLE. You are much mistaken if you think the government will tolerate such crimes.

YELVERTON. Ah! perhaps now that an Englishman has been murdered, the government may be roused to suppress crime.

LYLE. The radical government up to this has been remiss in its duties.

MRS. FONT. I suppose that is why its officers are so remiss. (*To* LYLE.) What are you doing here, sir? The captain should always stay on his ship.

LYLE. I have told you my errand.

MRS. FONT. Go back to your ship, Commander Lyle, and do not censure your government.

LYLE. I am beginning to see that it is not so much the government as others who should be censured. (*Exit at the right.*)

MRS. FONT. There, he is going up to the house instead of to his ship. Mr. Yelverton, follow him and stay with him till he leaves the place.

MASK. Oh, never mind him. (*Exit* YELVERTON *at the right.*)

Mrs. Font. What, my dear Mask—aren't you jealous?

Mask. Jealous—of course not—why should I be?

Mrs. Font. Commander Lyle admires Agnes.

Mask. Does he? He is a very worthy fellow, and, I believe, quite rich. She might do worse than marry him.

Mrs. Font. Do you think so? (*After a moment's reflection.*) Mask, it is time for you to settle down. (*Earnestly.*) My dear boy, consider. You are the last of your name. Your family is one of the most ancient and honourable in Ireland. You don't keep up your position properly. You don't seem to care for the interests of your family.

Mask. No, Mrs. Font, I'm afraid I never could take an interest in my family or in anyone else's.

Mrs. Font. You are a strange, wayward boy. You know what ruin your property has fallen into. A great fortune with your wife can alone raise you up again in the country.

Mask (*mockingly*). Yes, I know the country people think nothing of a man unless he gets a great fortune with his wife.

Mrs. Font (*somewhat annoyed*). To be sure, and why not—? there's Agnes with her great fortune. She has plenty of very good offers, I can tell you.

Mask. Then why doesn't she take one of them.

Mrs. Font. How can you ask such a question,

Mask? Well all I can say is that you mustn't expect to be waited for any longer. It is time for you to decide, as there are others coming—

Mask (*with a burst of anger*). This is an outrage upon Agnes. Speaking of her, as if she were some chattel or merchandise—I will not stand it.

Mrs. Font. What—? You need not be angry, if I wish to settle my daughter.

Mask. You don't realise the monstrosity of this. And Agnes who is so refined, so unselfish—so good—

Mrs. Font. Oh, my dear, I am glad to see at last you love Agnes. She dotes on you, I know.

Mask. I am not worthy of Agnes.

Mrs. Font. Not worthy—you with your rank—? (*Coaxingly.*) Mask, I have always loved you like my own son. I wish to keep your property as well as this property safe. There is a desperate attack being made upon them in these lawless times. I must resist it. I must win at all costs.

Mask. You are so accustomed to rule here. I only came to the possession of my estate in these lawless times, and never knew the old order; but you—you must find a terrible change.

Mrs. Font. Hah—you don't know what it is to lose riches and influence.

Mask. I never cared for either.

Mrs. Font. That's because you are a lord. You don't value what you are born to accept.

Mask. It's because there are better things to care for.

Mrs. Font. What are they, my son?

Mask. Genius and fame—

Mrs. Font. They won't give you any influence in the country. What is the good of them ?

Mask. It is they alone have any influence in the world.

Mrs. Font. To think that you a lord should demean yourself with such pursuits—you should be occupied only with what is suitable to your position.

Mask. What occupations do you think only suitable to my position ?

Mrs. Font. Why, establishing yourself by making a rich marriage, and hunting and shooting like every nobleman—not always reading, reading and looking at old things, and dreaming on the sea—is it true what they say of you, that you are learning Irish ?

Mask. Yes—you should approve of that.

Mrs. Font. Why—?

Mask. Because you speak Irish yourself.

Mrs. Font. I cannot speak Irish. I would not demean myself by any such thing.

Mask. But I have often heard you—

Mrs. Font. Well, well—only a word or so to the common ignorant people—but you, my dear, after your grand Oxford education, to be learning such a thing—

Mask. That makes it the more natural.

Mrs. Font (*puzzled*). Your Oxford education—eh?

Mask. Of course—don't you understand that a university with so national a culture, is sure to foster in a stranger a love for his own nation's culture.

Mrs. Font. I don't know where you could have got all your low tastes from, Mask. Those of your position are always English in their tastes, as they should be. For everything best in the world comes from England.

Mask. And still I would rather have the Irish language and culture than it all.

Mrs. Font. Well, I'd like to know what respectable person you'd find to talk with in it?

Mask. There is Guy.

Mrs. Font. Oh—of course he knows Irish, after his rearing by the country people. Believe me, if it were of any use, he would not know it.

Mask (*scornfully*). Any use—it has made him as if he had been reared not by rustics, but in the raths of kings.

Mrs. Font. It is he who has put these fancies in your head. Beware of him. I know his wickedness. He is not right.

Mask. I am surprised that one so practical as you can say such a thing.

Mrs. Font. Wait a while. He will do to you what he has done before.

Mask. You are always accusing Guy of this without any proof.

Mrs. Font. Didn't they expel him from school for drowning his school-fellow?

Mask. There was no proof.

Mrs. Font. Would they have expelled him if they didn't know he caused the boy to be drowned? And would every other school have refused to take him, and have left him here on my hands—perpetually before my sight, and crossing my path—?

Mask. The whole school used to bathe in the sea. It was an accident. Why should Guy be held responsible for it ?

Mrs. Font. Why is he always leading you away to the sea ?

Mask. It is not he.

Mrs. Font. Then it is *she* whose instrument he is.

Mask. Do you believe in the sea fairie ?

Mrs. Font. Aye—the sea fairie who has come back to Mask to take the last of her descendants—

Mask. It is strange that you of all others should believe in the fairies.

Mrs. Font. Remember I too have been brought up among the country people, and cannot shake all their beliefs off. Don't try to teach me anything about the country people, my dear. Beware of them. They are dreadful. See what his rearing has made of Guy.

Mask. If it is the country people who have made him what he is, they must have rare distinction of mind.

Mrs. Font. I don't know what that means. I

only know that they like nothing so much as pulling the gentry down to their level.

(*Re-enter* Agnes Font *and* Commander Lyle *from the right.*)

Lyle. Here you are at the shore since you wish it, Miss Font. I wonder you would not stay at the house.

Agnes (*perceiving* Lord Mask). Ah—there he is.

Lyle (*bitterly*). Always he—

Mrs. Font. Mask—here is Agnes come down to see you, Mask.

Mask. What do you want, Agnes?

Mrs. Font. Agnes, don't stand there looking like a fool.

Mask. Oh—Agnes, what have I said? Forgive me.

Agnes (*with an inward happiness*). Mask, you are always so good to me.

Mask (*to* Agnes). You shall not be spoken to like this. (*He looks at* Mrs. Font.)

Agnes. Take care, Mask. Take care. I don't mind. Don't mind me.

Lyle. Miss Font, you need not be afraid. I assure you—

Mrs. Font (*suddenly grown self-restrained*). Commander Lyle, will you walk with me back to the house?

Lyle. I regret I cannot, Mrs. Font. I must go on board the Seamew.

Mrs. Font. Good—(*To* Mask *and* Agnes.) Come along with me, my children.

(*A boy's voice is heard singing outside.*)

The Voice. Come follow me
Where sea winds fill
The shells with shrill
Songs of the sea!

Mask. Guy—there is Guy.

Mrs. Font (*with an evil look*). Always between me and my desire—

(Guy Font *runs in from the rocks at the left. He is a bright boy of fifteen years old, with short gold hair, an open countenance, and a manner of undefinable charm. He wears a boating coat and a sailor's cap of dark blue, an Eton collar, white flannel trousers, and on his feet pampooties of an Aran Islander which fit like a glove.*)

Guy. What are you doing here, Mask?

Mask. Waiting for you, Guy—

Guy. Why are you waiting for me?

Mask. Did you not say you were coming for a sail to-day? I have the hooker ready.

Guy (*thinks, then quickly*). I won't sail to-day.

Mask (*with disappointnent*). Oh, Guy, what is this for? and after I have gone to all the trouble—

Guy. Poor Mask, you had better go home again and dive your head into your books, (*with an impish look,*) like those big long-nosed boys at school who are always studying. (*He laughs wildly.*)

Mask (*rushes at* Guy, *catches him, and pretends to beat him*). Will you be good now?

Guy (*still laughing*). Oh stop! stop!! I am good.

Mask. Will you come out in the hooker?

Guy (*shaking himself free*). No—

Mask. Why—? Do come.

Agnes. Mask spoils you, Guy.

Guy. Poor Mask is good after all. Isn't he, Agnes?

Agnes. I wonder you don't respect him, then.

Guy. Oh—don't I just? Why there is no one like him.

Mask (*laughing*). Do you really think so, Guy?

Guy (*seriously*). Yes, I think so. (*Then with exceeding fascination.*) I know you will be great and famous.

Mask (*suddenly grasps at his heart with both hands*). Great and famous—

Guy. Mask, I would die to make you a great man.

Mrs. Font. Pshaw—as if he could be greater than what he is—a peer of the realm—you would do much indeed, boy, when you wouldn't even oblige him by going out for a sail.

Guy. But suppose I have a reason for not going.

Mrs. Font. Reason indeed—your own caprice —what reason—?

Guy. Because I want to show him such a beautiful sight I have seen in another place.

Mask. Where—?

Guy. In the sea caves—

Mrs. Font. Lies again—Mask, take care. Don't go to the sea caves. They are very dangerous.

Mask (*to* Guy). What did you see?

Guy. A white lady beckoned me down into the caves.

Mrs. Font (*in a hoarse whisper*). The sea fairie of Mask Castle—

Guy. I followed her, and climbed down the puffing hole.

Agnes. Oh, Guy, you were lost if you had fallen into the water there. You would have been carried by an under current out to sea.

Mask (*impatiently*). Tell me, Guy, what did the white lady do?

Guy. She seemed to float over the water and still beckoned me to follow her.

Mrs. Font (*with an evil look*). Why didn't you follow her?

Guy (*innocently*). I tried to, and bent over the rock until I thought I lost my balance, and I cried. Then I heard many voices answering my cry, until the cave was filled with beautiful singing. And the deep clear water became all light, and I could see down, down ever so deep—so many people.

Mask. People—what were they doing?

Guy. They seemed moving around a man in a car made of a big open shell and drawn by great fish with horses' heads.

Mask (*as if in a trance*). Manannan, Manannan—

"Sea-horses glisten in Summer

"As far as Bran has stretched his glance."

Guy. Mask, would you like to see Manannan?

Mrs. Font. These are all lies. Do not listen to him, Mask.

Mask (*not minding* Mrs. Font). How can I see him, Guy?

Guy. I found the way by chance to see him. He and his people can only be seen for a short time, because they quickly fade, and the music stops. It was then that I bent over the pool to see, and again I thought I lost my balance and cried, and with my cry all came back again, so that by crying I found I could always bring them back.

Mrs. Font (*to* Guy). You child of the devil, this is how you would destroy people with your deceptions.

Lyle. I do not think there is anything very surprising in what he says. Can you not understand that the singing he heard was only the echo of his own cries? His vivid imagination did the rest. Who is this he saw? What was the name?

Mask. Manannan, the old Celtic god of the sea.

Lyle. But that just proves what I say. The boy has only described the conventional representa-

tions of Neptune, or rather I should say Poseidon. I too have seen these representations in Athens when I was with the Mediterranean Squadron. Guy must have seen them somewhere in pictures which have sunk into his imagination.

Mask. Your prose will not explain the matter, Commander Lyle. If Manannan seemed like Poseidon, it is because the ancient Irish and Greek mythologies are akin. Some say that our remote ancestry was Greek.

Lyle. But how could old Pagan gods, who never existed, appear?

Agnes. Perhaps they are fallen angels, as the fairies—

Mrs. Font. They are all evil spirits. (*Looks with hate at* Guy.) That imp has an evil spirit. He should be banished from this place.

Guy (*insolently to* Mrs. Font). You may be banished from this place instead.

Mrs. Font. By whom I should like to know?

Guy. By me—

Mrs. Font. By you—what do you mean? Who are you?

Guy (*proudly*). I am the master of Fonthill!

Mask (*laughs recklessly, then with mock respect to* Guy). Oh—what dignity—! what a wonderful little master—! come let us go to the sea caves.

Mrs. Font. Do not go, Mask. He wants to see you drowned in that pool.

Mask. No, no—why are you so prejudiced? You shall come with us, and make all safe.

Agnes (*very frightened*). Mother, don't go to that dangerous place.

Mrs. Font (*to* Mask). Yes, I will go with you, my son.

(*Exeunt at the left* Guy Font, Lord Mask, *and* Mrs. Font.)

Lyle. Why are you so frightened, Miss Font?

Agnes. Oh—I don't know. I'm afraid all these things may lead to some misfortune.

Lyle. You are not so credulous as the others; are you?

Agnes. No, no—but I am afraid of some misfortune.

Lyle. To whom—? to Lord Mask—?

Agnes. Yes—

Lyle. Why—?

Agnes. He is so good, so confiding, so sincere.

Lyle. You think he may be led?

Agnes. Yes—

Lyle. I do not think so. I think he is the originator of those fancies.

Agnes. Oh—you don't know him.

Lyle. Of course, compared with you, I cannot pretend to.

Agnes. We have known each other as long as I can remember. Our families too have been friends for generations.

Lyle. Therefore you and Lord Mask must be very great friends indeed.

Agnes. Yes—very great friends—

Lyle. I am afraid you are something more, Miss Font.

Agnes. What do you mean?

Lyle. I mean, that if you were *only* very great friends, my pretensions to your regard might not be quite so hopeless.

Agnes. I assure you, Commander Lyle, I have a great regard for you.

Lyle (*chagrined*). No—but perhaps you will have, some time—when I may be of help to you.

Agnes. When—?

Lyle. When you come back to the real world.

Agnes. Am I not in the real world?

Lyle. No—you are in a world of shadows.

Agnes (*with a wan look*). We all follow shadows here.

Lyle (*tentatively*). Miss Font, there is something about you, that tells me you are not made to waste your life on shadows any more than I am.

Agnes. Like us all, you, too, are after shadows.

Lyle. No, I follow a substantial happiness—a happiness of earth—the greatest I can think of.

Agnes. But only of the earth, for all that—

Lyle. There is no other beauty that we can see.

Agnes (*almost with disdain*). How different this is from Mask's ideas!

Lyle (*vehemently*). Mask again—he always comes between me and happiness.

Agnes. His goodness must always assert itself.

Lyle (*very excited and angry*). He is good through indolence only. A selfish dreamer who would cramp the whole world into the mould of his fixed theory—without affection—without love—

Agnes. I will hear no more. How can you be so unjust?

Lyle. I am not unjust. I am indignant to see him unmoved by the beauty of this earth.

Agnes (*smiling*). Perhaps only a shadow after all—

Lyle. No real and exquisite as the maiden-hair fern among the rocks of your mountains—that is how this delicate beauty seems to me. (*With great earnestness.*) Do you think such a one would join her life with mine?

Agnes (*evasively*). There—I told you, you were also following shadows.

(Mrs. Rachel Font *re-enters from the left.*)

Mrs. Font (*furiously*). Am I to be beaten at last by an imp like this? (*Perceives* Lyle.) What—you here still—? All are combined to oppose me to-day? I thought you had to go back to your ship.

Lyle (*sadly*). I am going. Is there any use interceding for the people on the islands, Mrs. Font?

Mrs. Font (*sternly*). Go and do your duty, Commander Lyle.

Lyle. Good-bye, Miss Font.

(*Exit at left.*)

Mrs. Font. That imp of hell is bent on killing Mask.

Agnes. Are they in the sea caves? Have you seen anything?

Mrs. Font. No—I begged of them to come away; but they wouldn't. And I was afraid to remain. I felt the place very cold and damp.

Agnes. Mother, how could you have been so mad as to venture into that dangerous place?

Mrs. Font. I am mad enough now to venture anything. I must save Mask.

Agnes (*nervously*). How do you think you can do that, mother?

Mrs. Font (*with a veiled look*). I have suspected it for some time, and now I am sure that this strange boy is not the real Guy, son of Piers Font.

Agnes (*mystified*). Not the real Guy—who is he then?

Mrs. Font. Don't you understand? Don't you notice how odd and fairie-like he is?

Agnes. Mother, you are not serious. You don't mean——

Mrs. Font. Yes, girl, I know, he is an evil spirit changed in place of the real Guy, whom the fairies have taken.

Agnes (*with a quiet conviction*). Mother, you do not believe this.

Mrs. Font. I do believe it. What do *you* know of the ancient wisdom among the people? I was nursed and reared in it. But you reared among the gentry—what do you know? You are living blindfolded in the land.

Agnes. Abominable superstition—

Mrs. Font. So I tried to make myself think when I rose into your class, but I could not. The belief was part of my blood, and now it makes me see those things clear. (*With a deliberate intensity.*) He is one of those evil spirits, the Fomors, who haunt the land and seek human victims for the sea.

Agnes. How can you know such a thing?

Mrs. Font. Because I know he murdered that boy at school.

Agnes (*with a sudden suspicion*). I wonder did he? Oh, no—impossible—

Mrs. Font. I am sure of it now.

Agnes. Then what had you better do?

Mrs. Font (*with a stony look*). I must bring back the real Guy Font.

Agnes (*slowly, as if understanding by degrees*). But—but surely, you know what this means.

Mrs. Font (*still the same*). Yes—I know what it means.

Agnes (*wildly*). Mother, you would not burn him? You do not believe in that horrible thing?

Mrs. Font (*savagely*). Don't worry me, girl. I would do anything save Mask. (*Correcting herself.*) What I would do, would be right.

Agnes. You know it would not be right. How could you dare to do it in the face of the law?

Mrs. Font. Bah—the law—they can find out nothing in these times.

Agnes (*terrified*). Oh! you do not mean to dare this.

Mrs. Font (*grown suddenly cool and sardonic*). Of course not, you simpleton—

Agnes (*greatly relieved*). Ah—that is right. What could have made you think of such things?

Mrs. Font (*absently*). When I saw him in the sea caves just now, as he stretched himself out over the pool—

Agnes. It is dreadfully dangerous for Guy to do that. What a little would plunge him into eternity.

Mrs. Font (*as if for a moment thrilled*). The imp of the sea fairie back to the sea—

Agnes (*with a look of doubt and fear*). Come up to the house, mother. Come away from the sea.

Mrs. Font (*with a stony abstracted look*). Those who belong to the sea, should go back to the sea. (*They walk to the right.*)

Curtain.

ACT SECOND.

(Drawing room in Fonthill house; large and stately with last century decorations and furniture which look somewhat dingy. At the back are two tall windows with old fashioned sashes through which there is a view of a lawn, great ancient trees, and the sea beyond. On the right a handsome fire place, a door leading to entrance hall, and to the front a sofa; on the left another door.

(Agnes Font *carrying a bunch of flowers goes about and sets them in vases that stand on the mantel piece and various tables of the room.*)

(*Presently* Guy Font *enters hurriedly by door at right.*)

Guy. Agnes, she has caught me swinging on the stair-case again.

Agnes. Do you mean to say you hung those ropes from the landing again ?

Guy. Yes—why shouldn't I?

Agnes. You know how annoyed it made mother last time. I suppose she is very angry now.

Guy. I suppose she is. I didn't wait to see.

Agnes. You are very disobedient, Guy.

Guy. I am not. Why should she be angry?

Agnes. Well, you can't expect her to like the staircase turned into a gymnasium.

Guy. But this is my house. I have a right—

Agnes. Hush, Guy—you mustn't talk that way. Mother is your guardian; and you should obey her. What a pity you have done this to annoy her, especially as she was kind to you last night. She seemed quite changed. Didn't she?

Guy. Yes—didn't she look surprised when Mask told her what he saw?

Agnes. His story of the sea caves was very extraordinary. She evidently thinks you a sort of prodigy. What a mistake it was to annoy her by this new disobedience.

Guy (*thoughtfully*). You are right. I am sorry for it now.

Agnes. I see that Guy is not so difficult to manage after all.

Guy. Not by you, dear—

Agnes. Guy, you mustn't spoil me, you know.

Guy. Oh, you sweet Agnes—

Agnes (*laughing*). This is getting quite embarrassing.

Mrs. Font (*outside*). Agnes, Agnes—

Guy (*pointing to door at right*). Goodness!—she is coming.

Agnes. Yes, mother—

Mrs. Font (*outside*). Agnes, where are my keys?

Agnes. I have them, mother.

(Mrs. Rachel Font *enters by door at right.*)

Mrs. Font. Agnes, I want you to come to the store-room. (*Sees* Guy.) Ah—is it here you are Guy? (*She smiles at him.*)

Guy (*hesitatingly*). Yes—

Mrs. Font. Why did you run away from me, my child? Why are you afraid of me? Is not this your house to do in it what you please? I think it is very curious to see how actively you can climb and hang from those ropes. I was wrong to have prevented you before. You are a strange fairie child. (*Goes to left and looks back smiling at him.*) Run off to your gymnasium, Guy. Come, Agnes.

(*Exeunt* Mrs. Font *and* Agnes Font *by door at left.* Guy *who has listened bewildered to her, now seems to realise gradually the situation, and turns to door at right when* Lord Mask *enters by it.*)

Guy. Oh! Mask—so soon back—it wasn't worth your while to go home last night.

Mask. I suppose it wasn't. But do you want me never to be at home?

Guy. I'm sure all of us would like you to stay here.

Mask (*after a short pause, during which he looks with amasement at* Guy). How wonderful you are! The memories of yesterday are still haunting me.

Guy. You seem still dazed as when you came up from the sea caves.

Mask. I found the world yesterday looking so dim.

Guy. Yet the afternoon yesterday was bright.

Mask (*with a sigh*). I came from a brighter afternoon.

Guy. Yes—that white light in the sea caves—

Mask (*abstractedly*). The halo of the Antique—!

Guy. How beautiful it made all those people of Manannan—!

Mask. Yes, pure like art of the Antique—it was a vision of eternal art in the antique glory of the sea!

Guy. And just think, but for me, you might never have seen it.

Mask. I always felt you had a strange power. You are bringing us round to your ways.

Guy. Not you, Mask—

Mask. Why do you say that? Am I not ready to do everything for you?

Guy. Yes—

Mask. Have I not tried to make your life happier here?

Guy (*earnestly*). Yes—indeed you have, Mask.

Mask. Well why should I do so unless I was brought round to your ways?

Guy. In order to bring me round to *your* ways.

Mask. What are my ways, Guy?

Guy. Do you remember your talk with Mr. Yelverton on the day he first came here?

Mask. Yes—I remember thinking how pleasant it was for me, that they should have found you so cultivated a tutor.

Guy. There was one thing you then said I thought rather curious.

Mask. Indeed, Guy—what was it?

Guy. You said you took more interest in things than in persons.

Mask. Oh—fancy your remembering that—!

Guy. You said your happiness depended more on things than on persons.

Mask. Did I? Well, you know our ideals are the things to which we must bring persons, if those persons are ever to interest us.

Guy (*sadly*). That is it. I am just turned to use for your love of things.

Mask. Guy, I cannot bear that you should think me so selfish and callous.

Guy. But did you not tell me once that you needed me to give life to your beautiful dead things?

Mask (*is silent for a moment, then in reverie*). Those distant passionless antique things—ought you not glory in giving them life?

Guy. How can I give them life again?

Mask. By your life of vision—it has awakened for me the genius of the Antique!

Guy. What is the genius of the Antique?

Mask (*with abstracted exaltation*). Youth and form—pale marble form—!

Guy (*as if remembering*). Like the boys in the court of Manannan—

Mask. I have dreamed it all in solitary days at

Eton and Oxford; and now your genius has made me see in Ireland my dream of old Greece. How wonderful you are! You do not know how wonderful you are!

Guy. All I know is that I am sad.

Mask. What—you should rather be proud and joyful. You have conquered us all—even the hard nature of your guardian. Did you notice how gentle Mrs. Font was to you last night?

Guy. I cannot believe these things. I feel some trouble coming. That is why I am sad.

Mask. No—no—you are only sad because you are a genius of the sea.

Guy (*eagerly*). Oh—is not the sea sad? Isn't it, Mask?

Mask. Yes, sad with the wistful beauty we see in the faces of those marble tritons and nereids—you are sad with hearing the sighs of Manannan!

Guy (*confidingly*). But Mask, I am happy—oh, so happy in spite of all this sadness.

Mask. It is this exquisite sadness, Guy, that makes you happy.

Guy. Mask, do you remember when we first met you wrote poetry upon the sands of the sea shore.

Mask. And unlike what is written on the sands, it has remained. You were singing it yesterday. I heard you.

Guy. Yes, Mask, it has remained—for a whole year.

Mask. How much has happened to us both in that year !

Guy. You have become Irish, and I—

Mask. You have learned to recognise that genius of Ireland which is in you.

Guy. It was you who taught me, Mask.

Mask. We both found our lesson book in the sea.

Guy. I remember well how they used to wonder why you never could stay inland at your castle, but must always come down here, haunting the sea, as they said.

Mask. The enchanted sea of Hellas taught me to find an enchanted sea. I went to Greece from the Greek movement in Oxford, where the luminous pages of Winckelmann opened to us a vision of antique life.

Guy (*with a sly smile*). I think, Mask, you see Greece everywhere in the world.

Mask (*with a visionary look*). She was the beauty of the world. Youths and temples transfigured in plastic sunlight—galleys gliding like swans into the white Piraeus, while their oars break into creamy veins the blue marble of the sea—!

Guy (*in subdued reverie*). This is an enchanted sea.

Mask. You have made its enchantment live. You lead us now, Guy. We will follow when you call. Say again the call I wrote for you on the sands of the sea.

GUY (*reciting as in a dream*).

Come follow me
Where sea-winds fill
The shells with shrill
Songs of the sea!

(AGNES FONT *enters by door at left*).

AGNES. Oh! Mask, what a change has come over mother.

MASK. She is reconciled at last?

AGNES. Yes, she was speaking to me just now of Guy with such interest and affection. You would not have believed it.

GUY (*sadly*). Why does she trouble about me? It would be better for me—far better, if she left me alone.

MASK. How can you say such a thing, Guy? Don't you see we all shall be united now? Each of us without hindrance now can do a share of the one great work.

AGNES. What is that work, Mask?

MASK. To be ready to serve when the genius of our country awakes—

AGNES (*bwildered*). When the genius awakes—?

GUY. Agnes, have you never heard?

AGNES. Never—who is that genius?

GUY. Tell her, Mask. (*He leads them together each by the hand to the sofa at right where they sit, while he kneels at their feet.*)

MASK. She will not understand me.

Guy. Oh yes—tell her. Listen, Agnes dear. Then you will understand.

Mask. When I was in Constantinople during last spring a strange thing happened to me. As I stood on the site of Cæsar's palace I thought of the East and West again united, and of a Greek choir like angels once more beneath Justinian's dome. What a sublime work—! and to do it from such a palace overhanging such a sea—!

Agnes (*wondering*). Was there ever such a dream?

Mask. It changed my life: for a voice spoke to me in that dream. It told me to leave that land and sea, because they were dead. It told me to go where their genius had fled and was sleeping.

Guy. Here in this country, Mask—

Mask. Here in the Insula Sacra—the Ogygia of Homer and our Hellenic ancestors—the genius is here and will soon awaken, and he will revive arts, and trades, and letters in our ancient tongue which all will speak again. Let us be ready to minister. (*He lapses into thought.*)

Agnes (*submissively*). But how can I minister to this genius ?

Mask (*suddenly aroused and laughing recklessly*). You, Agnes—you may go so far as to attend a fashionable stall for Irish industries.

Guy. And I—what can I do?

Mask (*serious and earnest*). You child—you, because of your genius, will kindle a nation's imagination.

Guy. And what will you do, Mask?

Mask (*with an inward exaltation*). I will be prophet of all !

(Mrs. Rachel Font *enters by the door at left.*)

Mrs. Font. My dearest children—(*They all three stand up at once.*) I'm glad to see you together, Mask and Agnes.

Mask (*slightly irritated*). Is there anything peculiar in the fact ?

Mrs. Font. Not at all—(*Leering.*) But you both seem to get on so well together.

Mask. Is there anything peculiar in that either?

Mrs. Font. Of course not—in fact you both seem as if you were made for each other, my dears.

Mask. Indeed—isn't it odd then that you should come and unmake the whole arrangement ? (*He goes to door at right.*)

Mrs. Font. Why should you say that, my son? Where are you going?

Mask. To prove the truth of what I say—?

(*Exit by door at left.* Guy *quietly runs out after him.*)

Mrs. Font. He seems very cross to-day.

Agnes. Mother, why will you talk like that before Mask? It is very hard on me.

Mrs. Font. Hold your tongue. You don't know anything.

Agnes. Well—you see you drove him away.

Mrs. Font. How dare you say that? It was

you who could not keep him. It was all your fault. You aren't able to hold him. That's all.

Agnes (*faltering*). Oh! mother, I cannot do those sort of things.

Mrs. Font. Of course not—because you are worthless and incapable and a trouble and a disappointment to me. (*She turns away in disgust.*)

Agnes. Why this sudden attack—? I do not deserve it, mother.

Mrs. Font. Bah! you have no ambition. How different you are from your poor brother who is gone. He was like me. He was my son.

Agnes. I cannot help it, if I am not like you.

Mrs. Font. That is just it. If you were only like me, you would know how to hold Mask. No—and what's more, you even don't care about his title and position. You are very like your father.

Agnes. I love to think I am like my father. He was good.

Mrs. Font (*contemptuously*). No ambition—

Agnes. Mother, you ought not to blame him for that. If he was ambitious, would he, do you think, have married you?

Mrs. Font. Marrying me was the wisest thing he ever did. But for me, he never would have had that estate.

Agnes. Because he was good if left to himself—

Mrs. Font (*sardonically*). Good—you mean

weak. Goodness with such as you and him is only an excuse for weakness.

Agnes. It is no weakness to fear wrong-doing, mother.

Mrs. Font (*savagely*). What do you call wrong-doing?

Agnes. You know he would never have got the etate, if that will——

Mrs. Font. Stop, you fool. What do you know about wills? There was never a will but the one that held good in law. Why shouldn't I try to obtain the property when the law gave me a claim? Why shouldn't I take the property when it lay in my hands?

Agnes. It brought us no luck, and now it is back with the rightful owner again.

Mrs. Font. Not with the rightful owner, but with an evil spirit—

Agnes. Mother, I thought you ceased to believe that of him. Last night your manner became quite kind to Guy; and only a little while ago you spoke to him so affectionately. We were remarking it; and Mask was delighted.

Mrs. Font (*sighs*). Alas! poor Mask does not know that he is going to his destruction. (*Fearfully determined.*) I must save him.

Agnes (*with an averted look*). You have changed towards Guy because you would put him off his guard.

Mrs. Font. An evil spirit is not to be put off his guard.

Agnes. Leave him alone, mother. Something terrible will come of it, if you don't. It frightens me to think of you near him now.

Mrs. Font. Your fright is taking your senses away. Mind you do not thwart my wishes. I tell you this imp is not to be put off his guard; for he knows all things.

(Horace Yelverton *enters by door at right.*)

Yelverton. Miss Font, I have discovered such a treasure. Come, and I will show it to you.

Agnes (*nervous and preoccupied*). What is it, Mr. Yelverton?

Yelverton. An ogham stone—yes, a real ogham—I discovered it in the back-field. It had been placed for a lintel on the top of a sheep-pass.

Agnes. Mask will be very excited about this discovery.

Yelverton. Yes, he is looking at it now.

Mrs. Font (*severely*). You encourage him too much in his infatuation for such old things, Mr. Yelverton.

Agnes (*eagerly to* Yelverton). Come, let us go and see the ogham stone.

Mrs. Font (*suspiciously*). What do you want to see Mask for now, Agnes?

Yelverton (*looking out of window*). If it is only to see Lord Mask, she can see him here.

Agnes. Is he coming?

Yelverton. Yes—with Guy—

Mrs. Font. Agnes you had better go with Mr. Yelverton and see the ogham.

(Lord Mask *and* Guy Font *enter by door at right.*)

Agnes (*firmly*). I am not going without you mother.

Mask. Going—where—?

Agnes. To see Mr. Yelverton's ogham—

Mask. Yes, you ought to see it. It is a great discovery. Bring them there, Mr. Yelverton.

Mrs. Font. I will see it some other time.

Agnes. I do not care to see it now either.

Yelverton. I shall be delighted to escort the ladies.

Mrs. Font (*with a dark glance at* Agnes). I suppose we had better go. (*Looks towards the left.*) Come this way out by the back. It is the nearest way: besides I want to give some orders in the kitchen. (*She smiles affectionately at* Guy, *then exit through door at left, and is followed by* Agnes Font, *and* Horace Yelverton.)

Mask. Did you see how she smiled at you, Guy? You have certainly made a conquest.

Guy (*nervously*). I—I don't understand——

Mask. It was no whim of yesterday either, although she is so capricious.

Guy. From yesterday evening till now—what a long time—!

Mask. Come, don't be so sad. You ought to be joyful. Let us run to the caves.

(Mrs. Rachel Font *re-enters by door at left.*)

Mrs. Font. My children, I am so glad to find you still here.

Mask. Why didn't you go with the others?

Mrs. Font. I wanted to see you instead. I told them I would follow in a moment from the kitchen. So they went on. But I—I came back here, because I want to be alone with you, and to say something to you both.

Mask (*interested*). What is it you want to say?

Mrs. Font. I have not seemed kind to Guy.

Guy (*somewhat timidly*). No—you certainy have not.

Mrs. Font. You did not understand me, child. You did not understand me.

Mask. What is it you want him to understand?

Mrs. Font (*archly*). Have neither of you ever suspected?

Guy (*wondering*). No—I'm sure I never have.

Mask. Do you mean to say, Mrs. Font, you were not really what you seemed?

Mrs. Font. I was not, my children. I was only anxious to change you, Guy, from your habits.

Mask. You did not approve of his searching the secrets of the sea.

MRS. FONT. I thought the boy was wasting his life on folly and ruining his career. So I opposed him harshly. But all along I loved him.

MASK (*with a natural simplicity*). And was all your severity caused only by your love?

MRS. FONT. Yes, only by my love—Guy, come here.

GUY (*approaching her with awe*). What do you want with me?

MRS. FONT. I want to tell you that my mind has quite changed regarding you.

GUY (*wondering*). What has caused the change?

MRS. FONT. My dear, I understand at last that you are no ordinary child. I see now what you really are.

MASK (*laughing*). Now you understand, Mrs. Font, what I mean when I say he is two thousand years old.

MRS. FONT. He is a messenger of the spirits. I do not think it right to oppose him any more.

GUY (*eagerly to* MRS. FONT). Is it the sea-caves that have made you change like this?

MRS. FONT. Child, I want to see the sea-caves.

GUY. Will you come with me?

MASK (*joyfully*). He will show you their wonders. Let us all go together.

MRS. FONT (*seriously*). No—I want to go alone with Guy.

MASK. Why alone—?

Mrs. Font (*mysteriously*). Because—because I want to give a sea-fairie to the sea-caves.

Guy. Where will you find one to give them ?

Mrs. Font. My child, I will soon get to find them as well as you.

Guy. I don't think you will ever find them.

Mrs. Font (*suspiciously*). Why not, my dear—?

Guy (*eyeing her closely*). Because within you there is a woman of stone.

Mrs. Font. Well—well, anyway I will now try to find them. Come.

Mask. Do you want to go now—this instant, to the sea-caves?

Mrs. Font. Why not—why not—? Yes, let us go. Come, Guy.

(Agnes Font *enters by door at left.*)

Agnes. Mother, why did you not follow us?

Mask. Agnes, just fancy! she is going with Guy to the sea caves.

Agnes (*promptly*). Let us all go together.

Mrs. Font (*steadily*). I am going alone with Guy.

Agnes (*terrified*). But he does not know the danger.

Mrs. Font I have told him.

Agnes. You have told him ? Oh, impossible—

Mrs. Font (*coldly*). I have told him I wanted to see his visions in the caves.

AGNES (*astounded*). But I don't mean that.

MRS. FONT. Not that—what then, Agnes—? (*With a hard voice*). Tell them what you mean, Agnes.

AGNES (*looks with terror from one to the other, and says nothing*).

MRS. FONT. Agnes, child, why don't you speak?

MASK. There is no danger. What is the matter with you, Agnes?

AGNES (*as if suddenly awakened*). Nothing—nothing—(*Excitedly*). Mother, do not go to the caves. You know it will be terrible for us all.

MASK. There is no fear, Agnes. She will be quite safe where she will stand.

AGNES (*desperately*). Mother, do not go.

MRS. FONT (*pushing past her*). You foolish girl—!

GUY. Nothing can happen her Agnes. I will see to that.

AGNES. Oh, you innocent helpless boy—!

MASK. What do you mean, Agnes? He is all powerful. It is he who has changed your mother. Just think of that.

MRS. FONT (*calmly*). Just think of that, Agnes.

AGNES. Oh! was there ever such a misfortune?

MRS. FONT. Was there ever such good luck?

MASK. You should be glad, Agnes, to see us all united at last.

GUY (*laughing*). We are united. They follow me. (*To* MRS. FONT). Come, come follow me.

(*Exit laughing by door at right.* Mrs. Font *follows him.*)

Agnes (*for a while stands rigid with terror, then hurries to doors at right and left, but is both times overtaken by* Lord Mask *who locks the two doors and takes their keys.*) Let me go with Guy. I must go, Mask.

Mask. You must not. I tell you, you must not cross your mother. This is the turning point of Guy's life. All our happiness, Agnes, depends on this.

Agnes (*despondingly*). Yes, all our happiness depends on this. Oh! Mask, Mask, if you only knew—

Mask. I know what I am doing. It is you who do not know. I know your mother is not in danger.

Agnes (*wildly*). Not in danger—? she is in terrible danger. We are all of us in danger. I tell you, she was never in such danger in her life.

(Guy *is heard singing outside.* Lord Mask *opens window at back nearest the right, and looks out waving his hand.*)

Guy (*singing outside*).

Come follow me
Where sea winds fill
The shells with shrill
Songs of the sea!

(Agnes *staggers, and falls fainting on the sofa at right.*)

Curtain.

ACT THIRD.

(*The exterior of the sea caves. A plane of grass land on the top of a cliff. Several feet below at the back the sea reaches out to the skyline, and is flanked on right and left by mountains. In the grass on the left is a large chasm down which natural steps lead; beyond it to the left are some high rocks. On the right is a rustic seat. It is evening.*)

(Two Peasants *wearing black masks over their eyes and carrying guns stand near the chasm at the left.*)

First Peasant. They're a long time inside.

Second Peasant. Let's go in and shoot her at once.

First Peasant. Yes, and have the boy a witness.

Second Peasant. Shoot him too—

First Peasant. No, no, we have no quarrel with young Guy.

Second Peasant. Isn't he the real owner?

First Peasant. Yes, but you know well enough that he has nothing to say to the management of the property. It is old Rachel Font does everything. It is she who is now turning the people out of their houses.

Second Peasant. Humph—what can she and Guy be doing all this time down in those sea caves?

First Peasant. Oh—some diversion I sup-

pose—they must soon be up now. We might then get a shot at her.

Second Peasant. That's what you've been saying these days past. We've been tracking her quite long enough.

First Peasant. But then we've never been able to get at her without being seen by others.

Second Peasant. That's true. We haven't come out here to take old Rachel's life, and have our lives taken as well.

First Peasant. What's that? (*Looks to the right.*) There are people coming. Let's hide away the guns among the rocks here.

Second Peasant. Yes, we can watch behind a rock; and they won't see us.

(*Exeunt between the rocks at left, and as they disappear* Agnes Font *and* Commander Lyle *enter hurriedly from the right.*)

Agnes (*pointing to the chasm*). There—that is the entrance to the sea caves.

Lyle. I had better go down and see if they are inside. (*Goes to the chasm.*) Will you wait there, Miss Font till I return? (*Exit into the chasm.*)

Agnes (*nervously*). Take care how you go down, Commander Lyle?

Lyle (*within the chasm*). Oh—it is only like going down stairs for me.

(Horace Yelverton *enters at the right.*)

Yelverton. They told me at the house you were looking for me, Miss Font?

Agnes. Yes, Mr. Yelverton—thank you for coming. Commander Lyle called meanwhile; and I brought him here instead. But I had to wait till Lord Mask went away.

Yelverton. Why had you to wait? Why have you come here?

Agnes. Don't you know that mother and Guy have gone down into the sea caves?

Yelverton. No—is it possible he has induced her—?

Agnes. I tried to prevent them, but could not. And Mask opposed me too, because—because he is so delighted that they seem at last frends.

Yelverton. Why do you say "seem"? Are they not really friends now?

Agnes (*alarmed*). I don't know. I suppose so. I don't know what I am saying. I am terrified at mother going into that dangerous place.

Yelverton. I thought she would have been the last to be led there by Guy. Had I not better go down after her?

Agnes. Commander Lyle has gone. There—I hear them.

Lyle (*in the chasm*). Come this way Mrs. Font. Just one more step.

Agnes. Oh! I shall now know—

Yelverton. Why are you so frightened, Miss Font? Your mother is safe.

(*Enter from chasm* Mrs. Font *and* Commander Lyle.)

Agnes (*in a trembling voice*). Mother, where is Guy?

Mrs. Font (*with a steady look*). Haven't you seen him, my girl?

Lyle. She says she sent him up to get a shawl.

Mrs. Font. I felt chilly in the caves. I have been waiting his return ever so long. I do not know how I ever would have come out again but for you, Commander Lyle.

(Agnes *staggers and is caught by* Lyle *who leads her to the rustic seat on the right. She sinks almost fainting, upon it.*)

Lyle. There is no longer any fear, Miss Font. You see your mother is quite safe.

Yelverton. This is a pretty trick of that incorrigible boy.

Mrs. Font. To leave an elderly lady so long in such a place—well— (*Goes to seat and sits beside* Agnes.) My girl, don't be so nervous. What is the matter with you?

Agnes (*wan and shuddering*). Let no one mind *me*. What does it matter about me?

Lyle. I think everything, Miss Font?

Mrs. Font (*attending on* Agnes, *who shrinks from her*). She is perfectly well now.

Lyle. It seems as if some particular thing is distressing her very much.

Mrs. Font (*quickly*). What is to distress her? Commander Lyle, you are too pre-occupied about my daughter. All this must be put a stop to.

Lyle. I do not understand you.

Mrs. Font. Well, you had better understand at once that I have other views for Agnes.

Agnes (*bitterly*). Even at a time like the present I cannot be spared this.

Mrs. Font. It's to the highest of the land and not to a young sailor, that a girl with her enormous fortune now—

Lyle. I am not thinking of her fortune. Why are you so emphatic about the fortune now?

Mrs. Font (*with a dead look*). Because I won't have you in the place any more. You are trying to undermine my authority with my daughter.

Lyle. Pardon me, you are mistaken if you think—

Mrs. Font. Go back to your ship, sir, and attend to your business. I do not want to see you again.

Lyle. This is intolerable. I cannot stay to be spoken to like this.

(*Exit at the right.*)

Mrs. Font. It is well to be rid once for all of that troublesome fellow. (*To* Agnes.) What are you shivering there for? Go for a brisk walk. Do you hear me?

Agnes (*falteringly and with a scared look*). Guy—

Yelverton. Yes, I wonder where Guy is all this time.

(Lord Mask *enters from the left.*)

Mask. Oh! what has happened to Guy? Tell

me, have any of you seen him? Where is he, Mrs. Font?

Mrs. Font. He left me about an hour ago.

Yelverton. None of us knows where he is.

Agnes. Mask, *you* do not know?

Mask (*holds out a cap*). Here is the cap he wore to-day when he went with you, Mrs. Font.

Mrs. Font (*steadily*). Are you sure of that? Where did you find it?

Mask (*in a simple voice*). He gave it to me from the sea.

Mrs. Font (*eagerly and losing self-control*). You have seen him?

Mask. Yes—

Mrs. Font (*with a great effort to be calm*). What did he say?

Mask. He seemed as if he wanted to speak, but he faded away into a receding wave.

Yelverton. Where did this happen, Lord Mask?

Mask. Down by the cliff rocks where the sea is so deep—I was standing on a ledge, and watching the waves. I saw the cap floating near me, and as I knelt down to take it, he rose and gave it to me from the sea.

Yelverton (*taking the cap*). How strange—yes, that is Guy's cap. You really saw him, Lord Mask?

Mask. I saw him. (*Turns to each in succession.*) How has it happened? I know he is dead.

YELVERTON (*starts. Then, after waiting for* MRS. FONT *to speak*). We do not know.

MRS. FONT. I do not know. All I know is that he left me. Mask, dear, you are not well. Something has come over you.

MASK. It is because I know that Guy is dead.

YELVERTON. Mercy on us! I hope there is no reason for what you say.

MRS. FONT (*scoffing*). Of course not—go, Mr. Yelverton, go and look for the boy. Send out men in all directions to find him. (*Exit* YELVERTON *at the right.*) There, that will soon settle the matter. Guy is safe. He is too crafty for any mishap.

MASK. He has gone for ever to the sea.

MRS. FONT (*suspiciously*). How is that possible?

MASK. Has he not appeared to me from the sea?

MRS. FONT. Mask, take care. You know his power. He is safe; but this is some wile of his to destroy you.

MASK. I thought you had changed from your evil opinion of him.

MRS. FONT (*eagerly*). So I had. But now I know he is bent on destroying you.

MASK (*with reverie and regret*). Yes, he may at last destroy me, now that he is dead.

AGNES. Mask, what are you saying? Mask, have you no pity for me?

MASK. Why, Agnes—?

Agnes (*wildly*). Have I not a great enough misfortune to bear?

Mask. Then you also know that he is dead.

Agnes (*as if suddenly recollecting is seized with terror*). I have not said so. You must not think so. (*She bursts into tears.*)

Mrs. Font (*sternly*). Agnes, what do you mean? Are you mad?

Mask. She is as sure as I am, that he is dead.

Mrs. Font. What foolish imagination is this? How can she be sure?

Agnes (*involuntarily to* Mrs. Font). I am as sure of it as you are yourself.

Mrs. Font (*threateningly*). Agnes, this is not a time for jests; neither am I in humour for them.

Agnes (*in confusion*). What did I say? I did not mean to jest.

Mask. It is you Mrs. Font who takes the matter lightest of us all.

Mrs. Font (*after an instant's perplexity*). I can think of no one to be anxious about except about you, Mask. You ought to go home, and not be wandering always to the coast. Agnes and I will stay with you, and prevent your feeling lonely.

Mask. I should always feel lonely away from the sea.

Mrs. Font. Beware of it my son. Keep in your home. Beware of that school boy's fate.

Mask. Has Guy not come by the same fate himself?

MRS. FONT. You think so because a demon has personated him to destroy you.

MASK. No, no—the sea would not have had that look.

AGNES. What was the look you saw upon it, Mask?

MASK (*with a certain joy*). Wistful adoration for the beauty of the dead—!

MRS. FONT. Stay at home. Never go near the sea again.

MASK. I can never leave it again. It is an enchanted sea!

MRS. FONT (*caressingly*). Do not think any more of your evil genius, my dear. He was always your evil genius.

MASK. He stood between me and the shadows, and now he has gone to the shadows.

MRS. FONT. I do not know why you should think he is dead. (*Seductively.*) Listen to me, Mask, my dear. If by some ill luck he is dead, would you not like to live always in this beautiful demesne by the sea? You might then very easily make it yours.

MASK (*with a look of horror*). What is that you say?

MRS. FONT. Nothing that should shock you—don't you know that in the lamentable event of anything happening to Guy, this property must come to Agnes?

AGNES. I do not want this property.

Mrs. Font. Agnes, you must have it. There is no one else for it.

Mask. Horrible, horrible—as if I could touch what belongs to the dead—

Mrs. Font (*eagerly*). But I never said he was dead.

Mask. Now I understand why you have always hated him. Now I am sure you think he is dead.

Mrs. Font. I tell you I do not. You are ill and tired, Mask. (*Goes towards the seat at the right.*) Come sit here a while, and rest yourself.

Mask (*suspiciously*). No, Mrs. Font—I understand you at last. Now I know why everyone fears you. I begin to fear you myself for the first time in my life. (*Exit at the left.*)

Mrs. Font (*expostulating*). My dearest Mask—listen to me, Mask—

(Horace Yelverton *re-enters at right.*)

Yelverton. Guy cannot be found anywhere. No one seems to have seen him since the forenoon. I have sent people in all directions to look for him.

Mrs. Font. He will come back safely enough. He is only doing this to surprise us.

Yelverton. He deserves to be severely punished.

Mrs. Font. That's what I always say. Look here, Mr. Yelverton. (*Points to left.*) Do you see Lord Mask going along there?

Yelverton. Yes, Mrs. Font—

Mrs. Font. I want you to follow him. Do not let him out of your sight, Mr. Yelverton. He is giving me much more anxiety now than Guy. I beg of you to keep with him always. There—go, Mr. Yelverton, please.

Yelverton (*somewhat puzzled*). Certainly—whatever you wish—

(*Exit.* Mrs. Font *stands gazing before her with a stony expression.* Agnes *watches in fear and suspense. Pause.*)

Agnes (*with a hollow voice*). Have you nothing —to say to me ?

Mrs. Font (*calmly*). No—

Agnes (*hides her face in her hands and seems quite broken*).

Mrs. Font. What should I have to say to a trembling fool like you ?

Agnes. Oh—that I should be condemned to suffer this—

Mrs. Font (*threateningly*). Suffer what—?

Agnes (*losing her self control*). For pity's sake tell me the truth.

Mrs. Font. Agnes, I warn you to be careful of what you say to me.

Agnes (*with desperation*). You have overawed me all my life ; but now somehow I do not feel in the least afraid of you.

Mrs. Font (*angrily*). If you cannot restrain yourself, I will restrain you.

Agnes. I will speak because I have a right now.

Mrs. Font. What right have you?

Agnes. You are my mother. If you do not care about yourself, I have a right to prevent you from ruining me.

Mrs. Font. I do not understand you.

Agnes. Your evil deeds must be visited on me.

Mrs. Font (*furious*). What right have *you* to accuse me in this way ?

Agnes. My right to know what has happened to Guy—

Mrs. Font (*arrested*). You will regret your outrage upon me by such words.

Agnes (*breaking in wildly*). I regret nothing. I fear nothing any more. Nothing could be worse than my suffering now.

Mrs. Font (*cautiously*). Agnes, you surprise me. Are you losing your senses ?

Agnes (*kneeling and clasping* Mrs. Font *by the knees*). You can set my mind at rest. Oh ! set my mind at rest.

Mrs. Font. Certainly—how can I do so, my girl?

Agnes. You can say that Guy is safe. (*Beseechingly.*) For heaven's sake say that he is safe. Oh ! say it, Mother.

Mrs. Font. How can I say it when I don't know? I can only say I believe it.

Agnes (*looks at her and starts to her feet*). That is a lie.

Mrs. Font (*with smothered rage, as she walks apart*). You accursed child, I would know how to punish you—but for him—

Agnes (*bitterly*). But for him.

Mrs. Font. Yes, you have no sense of responsibility.

Agnes (*continuing*). But for Mask—you can restrain yourself—oh! and be restrained by no scruple either, when you think of your plans for him and me.

Mrs. Font. Yes, yes, I always had great plans for you. But you are worthless. You have no ambition.

Agnes. I won't allow ambition to stifle my feeling for what is right.

Mrs. Font. It is right for me to advance the family. How can it be wrong to do what leads to that?

Agnes (*disdainfully*). What a test for right or wrong. (*Then in a gentler voice.*) You cannot believe what you say. One would think, to hear you speak, that punishment in the next world for crime—

Mrs. Font. What is that you say about the next world? I tell you, child, I would willingly bear the pains of hell, if only I could see my daughter married to a lord.

Agnes (*with a look of horror*). You have often said I am like my father. What a mercy for me that I am—!

Mrs. Font. Yes—he was worthless. All my labour and resource were thrown away upon him.

Agnes. All your labour and resource will never get you your wish.

Mrs. Font. Fate may have helped me at last.

Agnes. Ah—you know only too well the fate of Guy.

Mrs. Font. I know nothing; but if he is gone, then Mask is saved.

Agnes (*looks for a moment doubtful, then says scornfully*). Do you think Mask will rest now that his link with what most interested him, is gone?

Mrs. Font. Yes—and if you are clever, he will turn to you, because he will be lonely and ready for company now.

Agnes. I do not wish that he should turn to me.

Mrs. Font (*surprised*). You do not wish? You who love him better than your life—

Agnes. I feel it would be like some great injustice now.

Mrs. Font. Where would be the injustice, I should like to know? Whatever may be thought about me, no injustice can be laid at your door. (*Gentler.*) Listen to me, Agnes. You are not going to throw away the whole happiness of your life?

Agnes. Alas! it matters little now what becomes of my life.

Mrs. Font. You have only one life to live,

Agnes. If you throw away this happiness, you will never have it again.

Agnes. I see no way of happiness for me.

Mrs. Font. What—not with the husband you love—?

Agnes. No—

Mrs. Font. Child, you cannot think how great that happiness is.

Agnes (*pensively*). What is the use, when I know it is not for me?

Mrs. Font. It is for you, if you are not so mad as to cast it from you. (*In an alluring voice.*) Oh! think, child, of the bliss to be with the one you love. Think of possessing him—yes, always—and the delight of serving him and pleasing him in numberless things, and of being worshipped by him in return. Think, too, of when he will tell you that you have been his salvation. For you will be that; and he will surely know it. And then the happiness of children—think of them—his children, and the happiness of home where you will be like a queen, and your grand position and fortune—to be called "My Lady," and walk before any of the neighbours—my Lady, my coroneted daughter—think of all that, my child. It will be like living in fairy land where you will forget all the trouble of the past, because you will have no time for anything but happiness and your love.

Agnes (*with a look of desolation*). Oh! why do you remind me of such happiness?

Mrs. Font. I want to give it to you, Agnes. Listen to me. Dont turn away, Agnes.

Agnes. Alas! as if my trial were not great enough——

Mrs. Font. What trial can it be for you to find your love? Oh! Agnes I beseech you. I who have thought and laboured to bring you this happiness—I beseech you take it. Take it, my child.

Agnes. I—cannot—

Mrs. Font. Don't say that, Agnes. Why cannot you?

Agnes (*with a great effort*). I cannot be a party to your wickedness.

Mrs. Font. Is it wickedness to save the man you love from destruction?

Agnes (*shrinking from her*). There—you admit you have saved him by this crime.

Mrs. Font. Not at all—fate may have begun his salvation. I am taking means to complete it.

Agnes. You will complete nothing. Confusion and disaster can only come from your work.

Mrs. Font (*with a sudden outburst of anger*). You are a foolish frightened girl. You are only a fool after all. You are not worth the trouble I take about you. I might have known that.

Agnes. It is better for me that I should be so.

Mrs. Font. Oh! you will repent of all this. Hush—there are people coming. (*Looks to the left.*) These two men are strangers. I wonder who they are.

(*Re-enter from the left the* Two Peasants—*this time without their black masks and guns*).

First Peasant (*saluting* Mrs. Font). A fine evening, your honour ma'am—

Mrs. Font (*eyeing them suspiciously*). A fine evening—what men are you?

First Peasant. We'er from the far side of the bay.

Second Peasant. We've been waiting about the shore here for a boat to take us across.

Mrs. Font. You seem strangers to me.

First Peasant. Oh! we know you well, ma'am, and all your family.

Mrs. Font. Do you know my nephew, young Master Guy?

Second Peasant. Indeed we do.

Mrs. Font. Have you seen him anywhere about the shore lately?

First Peasant. We have, of course.

Mrs. Font (*uneasily*). Where is he?

First Peasant (*surprised*). Where is he? Don't you know very well that he is down there in the sea cave where you have come from?

Mrs. Font (*sharply*). That is not true. He left the cave some time before I came out.

First Peasant. Indeed he didn't, ma'am. This man and I saw you go into the cave with Master Guy. We've been here among the rocks ever since;

and I could swear he has never come out. (*Turning to the* Second Peasant.) Isn't that so?

Second Peasant. That is the truth. I could swear it too.

Mrs. Font (*angrily*). You are both telling lies. You had better take care.

Second Peasant. We are telling the truth. There is nothing surer than that.

Mrs. Font. This is a conspiracy. I will have you both punished.

Second Peasant. Take yourse'f easy, ma'am.

First Peasant. Take care, ma'am, but you may get punished yourself.

Mrs. Font. So you think to put a suspicion on me.

First Peasant. I don't know. Where is Master Guy?

Mrs. Font. I have already told you.

Second Peasant. Oh that won't do faith. If he is missing, he has come by his death in the sea caves.

First Peasant. And of course by your hand, ma'am—the whole country knows how you feel towards him.

Mrs. Font. No one but two scoundrels, like you, would suspect me of this.

First Peasant. Because no one has the certain proof that we have.

Mrs. Font (*with terrible intensity*). Do you think I am afraid of you? You shall suffer for this.

Second Peasant. No, we shan't. Your life of wickedness is stopped at last. Many are those you have ruined. Many are the hearths you have made desolate. Many are you now driving out homeless into the world. But your days are nearly done.

Mrs. Font (*gives a horrible laugh*).

First Peasant. We shall be avenged on you, Rachel Font. When we next meet, you will be in the dock, and we will hang you.

(*Exeunt the* Two Peasants *at the right.*)

Agnes (*who has all along stood by as if transfixed, now approaches* Mrs. Font *and says with a scared unnatural calmness*). The reaping of the whirlwind has begun.

Curtain.

ACT FOURTH.

(*The entrance hall in Fonthill house—furnished as a living room with walls and ceilings of old stucco. On the right an arch, closed in by heavy curtains, leads to the staircase and other parts of the house. On the left, in front, a large fireplace; beyond it a door opening to the drawingroom. In the centre at back is a glass hall-door, and on each side of it a tall window with old fashioned sashes. Views of the lawn and big trees can be seen through hall door and windows.*)

(Lord Mask *and* Horace Yelverton *enter by the hall-door at the back.*)

Yelverton. Yes, stay in the house and rest yourself, Lord Mask. You must really be tired.

Mask (*listlessly*). We haven't been walking much: have we?

Yelverton. Don't you know we have been walking about the shore for hours?

Mask. It is you who are tired. Why did you continue walking with me?

Yelverton. Well, I thought I might distract you.

Mask (*sadly*). You are very kind, my friend. (*Turns away.*) Ah! no—his loss—I can never forget it.

Yelverton. Come, courage—you must not be so desponding.

Mask. What hope can you give me?

Yelverton. I am sure it is only temporary—this disappearance of Guy.

Mask (*with a fixed look*). No—his time was come; and he stole away like a shadow from among us.

Yelverton. I hope there is no cause for your fears. Poor boy! I hope he is safe.

Mask. Poor Guy—(*Moves towards door at back*). I feel I am with him only when near the sea.

Yelverton. But you are not now going to it again?

Mask (*undecided*). I don't know. Why not—?

Yelverton. No, no—you had better stay here.

(Agnes Font *enters by the door at the left.*)

Agnes. I am glad you have come in, Mask.

Yelverton. Yes, Miss Font, I am telling him he should stay in and rest himself. I will sit outside on the terrace. The day looks threatening, I fear. Equinoctial gales are due at this time. Nevertheless while the sun shines, I would rather read in its warmth than in my room. Do remain where you are, Lord Mask.

(*Exit by hall door at back.*)

Mask (*pensively*). Remain—rest—you, Agnes can rest. But I—I must go. I cannot rest.

Agnes. Where must you go, Mask?

Mask. I cannot tell. I only know that I hear one calling me.

Agnes (*interested*). Calling you—where?

Mask. Onward—

Agnes. Onward—and you do not know where.

Mask (*wearily*). Oh! the sudden snapping of a life's whole interest—it leaves us like dead men in the living world.

Agnes (*tentatively*). You cannot go home?

Mask. Home—no, now less than ever—I must never more leave the sea.

Agnes. I too must go away from home now.

Mask. You, Agnes—?

Agnes. Yes, the place has become unbearable to me.

Mask Of course—I understand. He is present still with us all. (*Goes to arch at right and pulls aside a curtain.*) Look—the staircase—his gymnasium—how pathetic are the toys of dead children. Your mother will never scold him for this again.

Agnes (*shuddering as she looks through the curtains*). It is like a gibbet with those ropes hanging —that forsaken plaything of the dead boy. (*She quickly closes the curtains*).

Mask. How terrible to inherit his possessions—

Agnes. Yes—terrible—but for more than what you mean—

Mask. For what, Agnes—?

Agnes (*earnestly*). Mask—if you only knew—

but we are beset with dangers; and you must soon know.

Mask. I do not understand you.

Agnes (*looks with terror at him*). You will know soon enough. Do not ask me. (*Rigidly.*) I must go from here.

Mask. Where will go?

Agnes. I don't know. I don't care, so long as I go from here.

Mask. Ah! you have no comforter. You never loved the sea.

Agnes (*after watching him for a moment*). Tell me, Mask, are you in great grief?

Mask (*faintly smiling*). Yes—but why do you ask?

Agnes. Because, somehow, you have a strange air of composure about you.

Mask. Yes, his presence is not terrible to me.

Agnes. Are we not afraid of the dead?

Mask. Not when we love them—

Agnes. I cannot understand such calmness in grief.

Mask. Because you do not understand how he is still with me.

Agnes. How is he with you?

Mask. In the wistful ocean—(*With a serene estacy.*) Oh! it is now so beautiful that, when I am near it, I live in a dream.

Agnes. And so in death he is stronger for us than in life.

Mask. Terrible for you, an exaltation for me—

Agnes. Alas, whither is he to lead us?

Mask. I cannot tell.

Agnes. And is this the end of all your dreams?

Mask. They have not ended. They have gone forth to live.

Agnes. Why will you not go with them, Mask?

Mask. How can the dead go with the living?

Agnes. You should not say that you are dead.

Mask. The genius of my life is dead: that is the same thing.

Agnes. If your genius is dead, then so are your dreams.

Mask. Dreams are immortal! They govern the world. We inspire those born after us, to act and make our dreams come true.

Agnes. I cannot think of this land as you see it in your dreams.

Mask (*sadly*). No—you cannot think. That is the way with one's friends. They cannot think. But strangers do it somehow after long years. It takes such a time to think. No wonder you ask whither the dead is to lead us.

Agnes. I cannot tell any more than you, Mask, except that it will be along different ways.

Mask. That, at least, seems to have been settled by fate. Good-bye, Agnes. (*He holds out his hand.*)

Agnes (*taking it*). Good-bye—we have been friends for a long time, Mask.

Mask. Yes, we have known each other since we were children, and I don't think we have ever quarrelled. Have we, Agnes ?

Agnes. Never—the past in spite of its troubles has been happy, now that I look back on it from end to end.

Mask (*lets go her hand and gazes before him with a pained expression*). My past has not been happy.

Agnes. You were too ambitious, Mask. You never could find the way of true happiness in life.

Mask. But now I have found it at last.

Agnes. Is your ambition then dead?

Mask. The world of men is nothing to me, Agnes.

Agnes. You are going to seek refuge in the world of things ?

Mask. I never felt as now such a sympathy with things.

Agnes. That is why you are drawn to the sea.

Mask. Yes—far away from the world to the sea—

Agnes. Where will you live in such a lonely place ?

Mask. I don't know. Do you know where you will live ?

Agnes. I see you are as wretched as I am. Neither of us knows.

Mask. You also are after a shadow. Good-bye, Agnes—leave the shadows.

Agnes. Good-bye Mask—(*She bursts into tears.*)

Mask. Poor Agnes, you were not made for the shadows.

(*Exit by the hall door at back.* Agnes *stands sorrowfully looking the way he has gone. After a pause,* Mrs. Font *enters by the door at the left.*)

Mrs. Font. What are you looking at there, Agnes?

Agnes (*turning*). Oh nothing—

Mrs. Font. You are crying as usual. What is the matter with you now?

Agnes (*drying her eyes with her handkerchief*). I am going.

Mrs. Font. How—going—?

Agnes I can no longer bear this place.

Mrs. Font. Agnes, mind you do nothing rash. Beware of disobeying me. That is all I tell you.

Agnes. You have made this place terrible and hateful to me.

Mrs. Font. You must remain in it all the same

Agnes (*with desperation*). I will not.

Mrs. Font. Agnes, are you going to desert your mother in the hour of her trial?

Agnes (*calmer*). The time has not come.

Mrs. Font. I may be prosecuted now at any moment.

Agnes. When the time comes I will do my duty.

Mrs. Font. I am glad you seem returning to your senses.

Agnes (*hoarsely*). I must bear *my* trial too.

Mrs. Font (*in a gentler voice*). Agnes—

Agnes (*looks away and does not answer*).

Mrs. Font. Agnes, I know how severe your trial is. I know you are in a difficult position, because you believe me to be guilty.

Agnes. I do not see what we can gain by discussing that question.

Mrs. Font. You, my daughter, are the only one who even suspects.

Agnes. Those two men—yesterday—know.

Mrs. Font. They don't know. They only want to ruin me because I have to defend the property against dishonest tenants.

Agnes. Alas! I should be contented if I could think that.

Mrs. Font. Well be contented then, my child. Why should you be otherwise?

Agnes. The hint that you let fall to me beforehand—besides this is not your first——

Mrs. Font. My first—what first—? what new imagination is this?

Agnes. That will—when you influenced father, who all his life afterwards was so miserable about it.

Mrs. Font. Idle gossip again—your father was a timid doubting man.

Agnes. He was a good man: and may heaven forgive you is all I can pray.

Mrs. Font (*checking her rising anger*). Well, well, it is not pleasant for either of us to discuss that question. I don't want to, I am certain. What I really want now, is that you, Agnes, should be the salvation of this young man you love.

Agnes. It is not to be. You have made it not to be.

Mrs. Font. My whole life's work has been for your and his happiness. I love you both; and you have always misunderstood my affection.

Agnes. How could I understand it, when you always seemed to repel affection? Oh what misfortune has made you what you are?

Mrs. Font. I never repelled affection. It is my family who have never shown any affection or gratitude to me.

Agnes. Is it possible you do not know how hard and pitiless you are? You are not like a mother.

Mrs. Font. Well, I do not understand you. I thought I had laboured for you as few mothers have. Anyhow let it be. I will not trouble you much longer. When I see you married to Lord Mask—

Agnes. Do not speak of that.

Mrs. Font. Be brave now, Agnes. This present trial will soon pass away. Then you will be peaceful and rich and so happy with him you love. Then you will know for the first time what my affection has been.

Agnes. I shall never know. Heaven help me!

Mrs. Font (*in a low seductive voice*). Then I will go away. You need not mind me any more. My work then will be done. You need never see me again.

Agnes (*with a revulsion of feeling*). Oh! mother was it all for this?

Mrs. Font. My girl think of all my anxieties and labours for you. Others show their love in other ways. That was my way of showing my love.

Agnes. And was it really done for love?

Mrs. Font. You'll know it, Agnes, when I am gone—where—who of us can tell? Perhaps I may have to suffer an unjust death. But so much have I your marriage with my young lord at heart, that to see it, I would go contented to that death. Oh! I pray of you, my girl, do not fail me in this great desire of my life. (*She falls on her knees.*)

Agnes. Oh! That it should take such horrors to soften your nature at last—! I never saw you like this before. I feared you once. I pity you now. (*Fitful gusts of wind are heard outside.* Horace Yelverton *enters by hall door at back.*)

Mrs. Font. Then crown my life's labour. (*Per-*

ceives Yelverton *and rises suddenly.*) Mr. Yelverton, where is Lord Mask ?

Yelverton. Is he not in the house ? (*To* Agnes) I left him here.

Agnes. Yes—but he went out again. He passed by you. I thought you saw him.

Yelverton. No, I never did. The fact is I was so fatigued that I fell asleep. I was awakened by the wind which has been rising for some time. (*The wind is again heard and continues at intervals during the following.*)

Mrs. Font (*To* Agnes). You let him go away by himself, and you did not even take the trouble to tell Mr Yelverton.

Agnes (*confused*). I never thought—it never crosed my mind.

Mrs. Font (*with sudden anger*). You fool—(*Checks herself and turns to* Yelverton.) See here, sir, you have been remiss.

Yelverton. I assure you, Mrs. Font, I thought I left him—

Mrs. Font. Never mind that now. Go at once and find him. Set the people of the place looking for him.

Yelverton. Yes, yes, certainly—

(*Exit quick by curtained arch at right.*)

Mrs. Font (*savagely*). Is all my life's work to be wasted? You miserable girl, I might have known you were good for nothing. Neither you nor

your wretched father were worth a ghost of my trouble.

Agnes. Both of us would have wished you had never gone to any trouble on our behalf.

Mrs. Font. Neither of you ever knew what was to your advantage.

Agnes. Alas! your deeds could never be to anyone's advantage.

Mrs. Font. I—I never could understand you. (*She walks about uneasily.*)

Agnes (*diffidently*). Mother, you were not like this a while ago.

Mrs. Font. I did not know then he was in such danger. And you—you made no fight to save him.

Agnes. Save him—what is to happen to him?

Mrs. Font. The sea fairy is waiting to take him.

Agnes. How can you still believe in such a thing with all your contempt for the country?

Mrs. Font. If the devil of the country once gives you a taste of his knowledge, you can never spit it out.

(Commander Lyle *is seen through the glass hall door.*)

Agnes. Commander Lyle—

Mrs. Font. Eh—what does he want? Send him away.

Agnes (*opens the door*). I am afraid Commander Lyle—

Lyle (*entering with pressing anxiety*). I must see Mrs. Font.

Mrs. Font. Well, sir, what do you want with me?

Lyle. A matter of great importance to you both—

Agnes. What is it?

Lyle (*with a forced laugh*). Oh—of course there is no truth in it. The idea is monstrous. You understand me?

Mrs. Font. Go on.

Lyle. But nevertheless it may cause a great deal of inconvenience. The law, you know—

Mrs. Font. Is it about those two ruffians I met yesterday? Have they falsely accused me?

Lyle. Precisely—now you understand. I thought I would come at once to forewarn you, and see if I might be of any help.

Agnes (*with a great effort to be calm*). It was very kind of you, Commander Lyle.

Mrs. Font (*stolidly*). What had best be done? What is going to happen?

Lyle. Well, you see the charge is most serious. (*Hesitates.*) It is a charge of murder. I understand that the District Inspector has a warrant for your arrest. But you mustn't fear. He can do nothing to you.

Mrs. Font. Does that mean I shall not have to go to prison?

Lyle. I am afraid it doesn't. Bail is never accepted on this charge. But imprisonment can only be till the winter assizes.

Agnes. Oh! she will never survive the time in prison.

Lyle. Courage, Miss Font—after the trial all will be well.

Mrs. Font (*calculating*). Over two months in prison till the winter assizes—(*The wind now gradually rises to a storm.*)

Lyle. A dreadful hardship, no doubt—at the same time, Mrs. Font, it will not be exactly like prison. You can always see your friends and have what food you wish.

Mrs. Font (*disdainfully*). Thank you.

Lyle (*turns away uncomfortably, then says with indignation*). This is a monstrous accusation. To think that his aunt and guardian should be suspected of drowning Guy in the sea caves—

Mrs. Font. Yes, poor Guy—I am afraid since nothing is heard of him, he may be drowned. But I don't know how it happened.

Lyle. Of course not—absurd—if I were the police I would not take notice of such accusations.

Mrs. Font (*steadily*). The police must make some pretence of efficiency, I suppose.

Lyle. Yes, that's it. Ever since their failure over the Phœnix Park murderers this last summer, they seem to have lost their heads.

Mrs. Font. To suspect me—one of the gentry—well it is a pretty pass their folly has brought them to.

(Horace Yelverton *pale and trembling enters hurriedly by hall door at back.*)

Yelverton (*breathless*). Oh! I have fearful news—

Agnes. Heavens! what is it?

Yelverton. Lord Mask——

Mrs. Font. (*shrieking*). What of him—what has happened to him? (*Grows suddenly calm.*) Is he dead? Do not tell me he is dead. Kill me before I hear he is dead. (*Pause.*)

Yelverton. I could not prevent it, alas! When I left you I called to the people, and rushed myself at once to the shore. There after a little, I found him standing on the rocks where before he said he had seen Guy. He was surrounded by the tide and lashed by big waves which the storm kept driving in. At times they would almost cover him; but he would raise himself out of the foam and stretch forth his arms as if exulting in his battle with the sea. I shouted to him to come to me, but as he did not heed I started to climb along the rocks that I might reach him. Then suddenly there came a mountain wave that caught and swept him into the deep water. He struggled to regain the rocks, and cried to me for help. But before I could come he sank; and I never saw him again. The great under-current there must have carried him out to sea.

Mrs. Font (*rigid*). The sea fairy was at Mask Castle indeed.

Yelverton. Oh, to think that I might have prevented this—

Mrs. Font. I never could bear doubts and regrets. I never could bear even to see an associate with my misfortunes.

Yelverton. My only reparation is to leave your house at once.

(*Exit sorrowful by door at the left. The storm gradually subsides and becomes still.*)

Agnes (*in anguish*). Oh! mother—this new misfortune—oh! I feel for you in this.

Mrs. Font. Think no more of me. I am dead. All in the world are dead.

Agnes. I am still left—your daughter.

Mrs. Font. I want no one in the world. Oh! how I hate the whole world now. They are coming to take me to prison. I have nothing left to strengthen me in suffering now. (*She goes to arch at right and draws aside the curtains. As she looks through the arch, she suddenly starts and stands transfixed.*)

Agnes. What are you looking at, Mother?

Mrs. Font (*excitedly*). Him—him— (*Calmer*). No—it was only for a moment I thought I saw Guy swinging on those ropes. No, the rope is steady.

Lyle. Shall I go and cut them down?

Mrs. Font. No—leave them. I would respect the wishes of the dead.

Agnes (*with a shudder*). You say he is dead.

Mrs. Font (*with a look of dreadful meaning*). He is dead. I will go in and sit with his playthings. Leave me alone. Let no one disturb me till they come and take me. Then bring them at once to me. They will find me there waiting—alone with the dead.

(*Exit by curtained arch at right, and draws the curtains close together after her.*)

Agnes. We are lost. We are lost.

Lyle. No, you are not lost, Miss Font.

Agnes. The police—will they not soon be here?

Lyle. I wonder they are not here before now. Did you notice her say that Guy was dead?

Lyle. Oh ! yes—don't talk of it. Oh ! what a a misery—and the death of poor Mask too—poor Mask—not even he was left to help me in this family disgrace.

Lyle. Poor Lord Mask—in family griefs we value the old friends.

Agnes. He was so unworldly, so enthusiastic—always the same since we were children.

Lyle. Now at last I understand the truth of what you say.

(A District Inspector *of the Royal Irish Constabulary in undress uniform is seen through the glass hall door at back. He knocks gently at door.*)

Agnes (*looks at back and whispers in terror*). The police—

Lyle. Yes, the District Inspector—had I not better let him in? (*He opens the hall door at back.* The District Inspector *enters.*)

The District Inspector. Pray excuse me; but my duty obliges me to intrude upon you. I purposely left my men outside. I hope I shall not be forced to call them.

Agnes (*steadying herself*). What is your business?

The District Inspector. I hold a warrant for the arrest of Mrs. Rachel Font on the charge of murder. Where is she?

Agnes (*with signs of inward struggle*). I—I cannot. Help me, Comander Lyle.

Lyle (*goes to curtained arch at right, listens for a moment, then says*). Mrs. Font—

Mrs. Font (*from within*). Yes—what is it?

Lyle. The District Inspector has come. He wants you.

Mrs. Font (*from within*). Wait a moment. He can see me in a moment. (*From within a cry stifled by the sound of a jerk is heard. Then silence.*)

Agnes (*in a terrified whisper*). What's that?

Lyle (*slowly as if dazed, draws the curtains aside, looks for a moment, then starts back in horror.*) Come away. Come away. Don't look.

The District Inspector (*rushes to arch and looks through. Is staggered for an instant, then says*). See from the staircase—a woman hanging—

Lyle. Mrs. Font—she has hanged herself.

Agnes (*also rushes and looks through arch*). Oh! the ropes, the ropes on the staircase—(*In a trembling voice.*) The dead boy has done this.

Lyle. Help! help—!

Agnes. Help! help! help—!

(*Exeunt all three through the arch at left. There are confused noises from within as of several people hurrying, and cries of horror and fright.*)

The District Inspector (*from within*). Cut the rope. There—

Agnes (*from within*). Mother, mother, dearest mother, speak to me. (*Pause.*)

Lyle (*from within*). She is dead.

Agnes (*from within*). Oh! mother, why did you die? Now all are dead but me.

(*More confused noises, then* Commander Lyle *and the* District Inspector *re-enter by arch at right.*)

The District Inspector. This is a most shocking case. Did you notice her neck is quite broken? She must have dropped from the landing. It's lucky for me I did no more than my duty.

Lyle (*shaken and hesitating*). You are saved from further duty in the case. So am I. And I might have found my duty difficult.

The District Inspector. Very likely—well all I have to do now is to inform the Coroner.

(*He bows and exit by hall door at back.*)

Lyle (*goes to arch at right*). Miss Font, come away. Let them bring her up-stairs to her room.

You can do nothing now. You had better keep away from the dead.

(Agnes Font *enters by arch at right.* Lyle *closes the curtains after her. She stands looking before her with tears in her eyes. Pause. The evening gradually darkens.*)

Agnes (*with a deep sigh*). Oh! it is too terrible to be real. It is all like some dreadful dream.

Lyle. Try not to think of it, Miss Font. The worst is now passed. You have awakened from the dream; and your life in a little time will be peaceful.

Agnes (*as if suddenly remembering*). But it can never be so beautiful, like the beginning of my dream——

Lyle. That was long ago; for you have lived in a long dream.

Agnes (*with a sudden conflict of feeling*). Oh! the beauty and the sorrow of it—(*Slowly and steadily.*) It has come all before me now, so that I see it as if without beginning and without end.

Lyle (*eagerly*). Put it for ever from you. I cannot bear to hear you speak of it, for I know I was nothing to you in that dream. You must leave this place, Miss Font. This lonely sea was suited to the visionaries who have passed with their visions away. Women have no strength for such things. You who have awakened to real life, can find no place here.

Agnes. Yes—I am only a weak girl. His life was too ideal. He saw I was too weak for his life.

Lyle. You are not too weak for a life of the earth. That is why I never lost hope that I might be something to you at last. Come away—for ever.

Agnes. Do you say that now after these terrible things you know?

Lyle. After all I know—and if they were ten times worse, they could not injure one so stainless as you. Perhaps now I may be something to you—at last.

Agnes (*Slowly and thoughtfully*). Perhaps—

Curtain.

The End.